

BRATYANSKI, JENNIFER A., Ph.D. Mainstreaming Movements: The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement and Civil Rights Memory (2012)
Directed by Dr. Thomas F. Jackson. 190pp.

By the time of Nelson Mandela's release from prison, in 1990, television and film had brought South Africa's history of racial injustice and human rights violations into living rooms and cinemas across the United States. New media formats such as satellite and cable television widened mobilization efforts for international opposition to apartheid. But at stake for the U.S. based anti-apartheid movement was avoiding the problems of media misrepresentation that previous transnational movements had experienced in previous decades. Movement participants and supporters needed to connect the liberation struggles in South Africa to the historical domestic struggles for racial justice. What resulted was the romanticizing of a domestic civil rights memory through the mediated images of the anti-apartheid struggle which appeared between 1968 and 1994. Ultimately, both the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements were sanitized of their radical roots, which threatened the ongoing struggles for black economic advancement in both countries.

MAINSTREAMING MOVEMENTS: THE U.S. ANTI-APARTHEID
MOVEMENT AND CIVIL RIGHTS MEMEORY

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2012

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To the following for their invaluable support over these many years

Allen W. Trelease
Monroe Gilmour
Lyndall Hare
The Back Alley Film Series
Josh Burford
Emily Seelbinder
Terry Campbell
Cory Joe Stewart
Angela Marritt
Susan Thomas
Chris Meekins
Missy Foy
Tiffany Butler
Paige Meszaros
Kevin Greene
Laurie O'Neill

Chuck Bolton, Benjamin Filene, Stacy Morgan, & Tom Jackson
AND THE ENTIRE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Family, the Chicks, and Hooper

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, November 21, 1984, activists departed from the offices of the foreign policy lobbying organization TransAfrica in Washington, D.C., and headed over to the South African Embassy for an appointment with that country's Ambassador. The four activists, Congressman Walter Fauntroy (D-DC), Georgetown law professor Eleanor Holmes Norton, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, and Executive Director of TransAfrica Randall Robinson were arrested later that day for trespassing at the embassy. They refused to leave the Ambassador's offices after demanding the release of recently imprisoned trade unionists in South Africa and the end of apartheid. The four activists had intended to be arrested, having alerted the media to their plans prior to their arrival at the Embassy. When the police removed the four from the premises, the media were stationed outside to document the event. The arrests made headlines and led nightly news broadcasts during an otherwise slow news period as a result of the Thanksgiving holiday. Following the arrests, the phones at the TransAfrica offices rang nonstop. Hundreds of volunteers, inspired by the activists, called TransAfrica to lend their support. These events marked the birth of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) and resulted in a yearlong demonstration in front of the South African Embassy.

The press took notice when celebrities participated in the demonstration outside of the Embassy, but even more so when a distinguished figure such as seventy-one-year-

old Rosa Parks appeared in the picket line on a cold December morning.¹ Parks arrived at the South African Embassy to lend her considerable historical weight to the FSAM campaign and stated, “I am grateful to be here today lending my support.”² Her presence was coordinated to “shame U.S. policy makers as well as the nation” into action against the apartheid government of South Africa. According to FSAM members, it was the “path of celebrity arrests” that gave regular people the courage to risk arrest as well.³ The appearance of Parks along with the thousands of activists that participated in the year-long demonstration outside the Embassy conjured up imagery reminiscent of the civil rights past and helped connect the two movements in the public eye. Newspapers and news weeklies quickly spread the story of FSAM activism under headlines such as “1960s Tactics Were Revived for Embassy Sit-Ins.”⁴ According to the *New York Times*, the FSAM campaign was the heir apparent to the civil rights movement as “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s’ History.”⁵ *Newsweek* was more cautious with their article “A Movement Reborn?” Unfortunately, in making these comments the press and some

¹ On December 6, 1984 *NBC Nightly News* reported on the arrests of Mrs. Jesse Jackson, Senator Gary Hart, Douglass and Rory Kennedy (children of the late Robert Kennedy). February 12th, 1985 *The Washington Post* reported on the arrest of famed musician Stevie Wonder; January 9, 1986 *USA Today* reported that famed folk singers Peter, Paul, and Mary had been arrested.

² Karlyn Barker, “Rosa Parks, New Groups Join Protest,” *The Washington Post*, December 11 1984.

³ FSAM coordinators manned phones for weeks scheduling protestors who agreed to be arrested. Celebrity activists who also agreed to demonstrate and get arrested included Arthur Ashe, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman, Tony Randall, and Amy Carter (daughter of former President Jimmy Carter.). *Have Your Heard From Johannesburg. Apartheid and the Club of the West*, directed by Connie Fields, (2006: Berkeley, CA: California Newsreel, 2006), DVD.

⁴ Karlyn Barker and Michel Marriot, “1960s Tactics Revived for Embassy Sit-In,” *The Washington Post*, November 29, 1984; Barbara Gamarekian, “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s History,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 1984; “The Civil Rights Movement’s Children,” United Press International, December 31, 1984.

⁵ “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s History,” *The New York Times*. November 30, 1984.

prominent activists who participated in the anti-apartheid demonstration discounted nearly four decades of previous consciousness-raising and direct action campaigns in which U.S. based anti-apartheid organizations and individual activists had engaged. This oversight was evident when Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., remarked, “My feeling is that there are many people who feel the need to do something about the conditions in South Africa, but there has been no organized efforts on a large scale. I think this is the beginning of that organization.”⁶

No doubt the 1984 FSAM Embassy demonstration mobilized support and encouraged thousands of activists to participate in mass protest, which resulted in thousands of arrests across the country. However, the theater of protest created by anti-apartheid organizations like the FSAM reinforced the mediated television and film images of a sanitized civil rights past. By 1990 popular media had brought South Africa’s history of racial injustice and human rights violations into living rooms and movie theaters around the world, with coverage not unlike that in the United States during the 1960s civil rights demonstrations. Television had shrunk the world, and in the process became a lens for identifying and eradicating ignorance and promoting democracy. New media formats such as cable television were available as a means to mobilize international opposition to apartheid. But at stake for the U.S. based anti-apartheid movement was avoiding the problems of media misrepresentation that previous transnational movements had experienced. In this study I examine the framing of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement by movement participants and the popular media between

⁶ “A Movement Reborn?” *The Washington Post*, December 1984.

1968 and 1994 and the role each played in the development of a sanitized national civil rights memory. My study's focus on the U.S. based anti-apartheid movement builds upon the studies in new social movements, mass communication, and transnational liberation movements. The period under examination connects the successes and failures of recent American protest activism to the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. But this study also recognizes the anti-apartheid movement as one of the last decentralized movements to achieve international recognition and broad national support without the aid of internet social networking.

Despite nearly four decades of U.S. anti-apartheid activism, the American public had remained largely naïve to the complex history of apartheid. Beginning in 1948, the same year that President Truman integrated the armed service in the United States, the policies that became known as *apartheid* or “apartness” in South Africa systematically purged South Africa of its black tribal ancestry. Black South Africans were stripped of their citizenship and became foreigners in their native land. Black South Africans were restricted to bantustans, homelands created by the white minority regime in an effort to encourage self-rule and cultural unity among the Black South Africans. Similar to the forced removal of Native Americans to reservations within the United States, resettlement to bantustans was equally dispiriting; despite the promise of self-rule, conditions forced residents of the bantustans to rely heavily upon the South African government to supplement nearly every aspect of their territory.⁷ Apartheid's architects

⁷ John B. McDermott, “Africa Using Indian Reservation Idea,” *The Washington Post*, December 16, 1956.

created the legislative and economic means to preserve and consolidate the power of South Africa's minority white population. After these developments in South Africa, national and local anti-apartheid groups formed within the United States, throughout the 1950s and 1960s. U.S. anti-apartheid activists developed campaigns, staged rallies, held conferences, and organized demonstrations that challenged the formal implementation of apartheid within South Africa.

By the mid-1970s, the armed struggle against the apartheid government in South Africa proved problematic for U.S. activists reared on the virtues of non-violent direct action. Despite decades of coalition building and years of campaigns designed to attract popular support, U.S. activists had failed to mobilize national support for American sanctions against South Africa. The escalation of the armed struggle in South Africa stood in direct contrast to the legacy of non-violence made popular by slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his memory brokers, which included Reverend Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King. U.S. anti-apartheid activists continued to emphasize King's role as a crusader for non-violent Third World liberation, all the while promoting a triumphalist civil rights memory. Former black radicals within the United States discovered if they transitioned away from the polarizing campaigns based around racial solidarity and Black Nationalism and instead, embraced campaigns centered on a moderate anti-racist discourse, their efforts broadened popular appeal toward U.S. anti-apartheid activism. The media's framing of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa around a moderate view of a black freedom struggle became a critical component in the mobilization efforts of popular support for U.S. anti-apartheid activism.

By the mid-1980s, popular demands for changes in American investment and foreign policy toward South Africa increased. U.S. activists and the media framed the anti-apartheid struggle in a way that subverted images of the armed struggle in South Africa, and instead featured black activists as extensions of a “long civil rights movement.”⁸ Under the auspices of Ronald Reagan’s renewal of faith in American supremacy, the actions of groups like the FSAM and their supporters became a lens for a new generation of activists and the public to view the civil rights past. What resulted was a romanticizing of the civil rights movement which delegitimized violence as a movement tactic, marginalized women of the movement, and located a messianic figure among movement participants whose role was to deliver the oppressed out of subjugation. Protestors demonstrating in front of the South African Embassy in the winter of 1985 were featured on the nightly news singing the renowned movement song, “We Shall Overcome.” The decision to sing this legendary freedom song connected American audiences to the anti-apartheid activists through a popular triumphal civil rights memory.⁹

The decentralized nature of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement, however, was a significant obstacle to mobilizing national support. An array of individuals, organizations, and institutions independently engaged in mobilizing support against U.S. investment and trade with South Africa as well as against American foreign policy that supported a Cold War ally. There was no identifiable charismatic leadership for the

⁸ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movements and the Political Use of the Past,” *Journal of American History*, 91 (March 2005): 1233-63.

⁹ *Have Your Heard From Johannesburg. Apartheid and the Club of the West*, directed by Connie Fields, (2006: Berkeley, CA: California Newsreel, 2006), DVD.

public to mobilize around. National organizations formed, beginning with the leftist Congress on African Affairs (CAA) (1941) which was abolished by an anti-communist opposition. Later, the more moderate American Committee on Africa (ACOA) (1953) was created which filled the void left behind by the CAA. To successfully mobilize national support and challenge American economic and foreign policies concerning South Africa, U.S. activists needed to present the liberation struggles in South Africa in a manner that resonated with the American people.

This study sits at the intersection of several trends in the multidisciplinary study of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. The once broad comparative approaches to the study of institutional racism in the United States and South Africa have become more localized. But a need remains to reflect on how the strategies and campaigns of transnational movements influenced the popular memory of America's domestic civil rights struggle.¹⁰ New studies concerning the effects of media framing on movement activity have focused intently on the black freedom struggle, especially in the years between 1957 and 1968. But few studies have examined the media's role in framing

¹⁰ For a comparative approach to American and South African histories see: George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982); George Fredrickson, *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); For a U.S. based perspective of the anti-apartheid movement see: Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-198*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Anti-Apartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2005); Janice Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics*, (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1985); For a comparative approach of transnational anti-apartheid groups see: Rob Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c. 1919-1964*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2010); Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2006).

African American activism, domestic or international, beyond the 1960s.¹¹ While studies about the economic sanctions and the university and corporate divestment campaigns do afford social and political movement scholars a wealth of information concerning effective local mobilization strategies, none have looked at how activists connected to the public through the cultural and technological opportunities afforded to them in the late 1970s and 1980s.¹²

The challenge associated with studying the U.S. anti-apartheid movement is its decentralized nature. Sources of individual organizations and movement participants are scattered throughout the country, which accommodates local and regional studies, but proves a challenge to broader studies of the movement. Recent studies have examined the symbolic and formal campaigns initiated by African Americans that championed racial solidarity among people of color (particularly among descendants of the Diaspora).¹³ But

¹¹ Media framing of the civil rights movement see: *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. Brian Ward, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), Steven D. Classen, *The Struggles Over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-1968*. Forward by Myrlie Evers-Williams, (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, (New York: The New Press, 2007); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights, and the Awakening of a Nation*, (New York: Knopf, 2006); Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003). For media framing of apartheid see: John M. Phelan, *Apartheid Media. Disinformation and Dissent in South Africa*, (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1987); James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media: 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000).

¹² Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States in the Apartheid Years*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997); William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb, Jr., *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century, 1950-2000*. Forward by Nelson Mandela, (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008), 43.

¹³ Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Black Americans and U.S. Foreign, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer. (Chapel Hill: University of

despite the growing transnational perspective in African American studies, few have noticed the development of new media in the post-civil rights era and its impact on defining the memory of the black experience within the United States. Historical studies of social movements have shifted away from focusing on national groups and their leadership to focus on grassroots organizing. But this grassroots perspective has narrowed that focus to a collection of localized studies.

A comparative approach to the study of institutional racism has provided an avenue to discuss the similarities between anti-apartheid activism and the domestic civil rights movement. But complications have emerged in the comparisons. Black Americans were citizens denied the rights and protections guaranteed to them, whereas non-white South Africans struggled against the added challenge of securing citizenship. The series of prolonged calculated measures by white South Africans to strip the black laboring classes of any political or economic rights thus ensured a dependent disenfranchised labor pool for South African industries. Despite these obvious differences, comparative studies are effective in placing the anti-apartheid struggle within a similar *racial context* as the civil rights struggles of black Americans.¹⁴ But while earlier disappointments frustrated activists, these movements were forged during a period that movement scholar Jo

North Carolina Press, 2003); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Lewis V. Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King, Jr. and South Africa*. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995).

¹⁴ George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in America and South African History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); George Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Fredrickson, *The Comparative Imagination: On The History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ann Seidman, *Apartheid, Militarism, and the U.S. Southeast*, (Trenton: African World Press, Inc. 1990).

Freeman states was a “climate of expectation,” an expectation that rights- based movements would prevail with similar success as the domestic civil rights movement.¹⁵ The “victory culture” that culminated in Reagan’s re-election also inspired anti-apartheid activists unwilling to let four more years of Reagan’s concessions toward the oppressive South African government continue.¹⁶ While other transnational movements, like Nuclear Freeze, experienced similar disappointments with the Reagan administration’s foreign policy, the U.S. based anti-apartheid activists had a significant advantage: a movement message not obscured by abstract imagery or hypothetical scenarios. The themes of the domestic civil rights movement for racial justice and equality were transmitted onto television screens across the United States and encouraged the public into action. While the mainstream media’s broadcast time constraints largely reduced the complexities of apartheid within South Africa to a black vs. white dichotomy, this portrayal did not diminish the sense of urgency that anti-apartheid activists used to inspire support after Reagan’s re-election. A new wave of anti-apartheid activism in the mid-1980s emerged, inspired by a resurgence of symbolic direct-action campaigns. But the campaigns and the media coverage of the more popular demonstrations (like the FSAM) had simplified anti-apartheid activism to campaigns focused on divestment or sanctions rather than educate the public on the economic injustice that sustained apartheid. The presence of civil rights activists like Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King at

¹⁵ Jo Freeman, “On the Origins of Social Movements,” *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, eds. Jo Freeman & Victoria Johnson, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 7-24.

¹⁶ Tom Engelhardt, *The End of the Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation*. 2nd Edition, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

demonstrations further legitimized the message of a moral struggle occurring within South Africa.

The greatest challenge that confronted anti-apartheid campaigns in the United States was avoiding the media backlash that befell the beleaguered protestors of the late 1960s. A new generation of activists came of age during the civil rights and anti-war movements, which radicalized old ideologies concerning movement activism.¹⁷ Anti-war activists and black radicals became increasingly identified with a radical fringe, or were deemed ineffectual, throughout much of the 1970s.¹⁸ Connecting the liberation struggle within South Africa to a moderate rendering of civil rights activism was imperative in gaining national support to effect policy changes. Assisting these efforts was the presence of emerging technologies and popular cultural opportunities of the late 1970s and 1980s, which increased the occasions for American audiences to encounter the movement's "moral appeal," concerning South Africa. The sites of resistance where young black activists challenged racial and economic injustice in places like Greensboro or Birmingham increased public support and have remained symbolic locales for future activists due largely to the way the popular media framed those activists. But U.S. based anti-apartheid activists were denied the symbolic sites of resistance of Sharpeville and

¹⁷ *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, eds. Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Richard Flacks, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995); James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left. with a New Preface*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; Edward R. Morgan. *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press. 2010; On Nuclear Freeze rallies being shot as a series of festive images see *Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze*. eds. Thomas R. Rochon and David S. Meyer. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997. pgs.97-126.

Soweto. U.S. activists were unable to share in or commemorate the same *coming of age* struggles with their brothers and sisters in South Africa in those sacred spaces. Fortunately, as internal conflicts among the liberation groups in South Africa increased, their complexities did not hinder the momentum of U.S. based activism. U.S. campaigns were able to mobilize support around a clear and relatable movement message for popular consumption. While environmental activists, anti-nuclear advocates, and rights-based groups followed similar well-orchestrated protest traditions, the anti-apartheid campaigns used their power of moral appeal that coincided with the gruesome images of white on black violence in South Africa, appearing in broadcast and print media. The inherent racism of apartheid was framed for American audiences as an extension of the Jim Crow South, connecting audiences to that memory through the clearly relatable moral message of anti-racism.¹⁹

Chapter Two identifies the early waves of anti-apartheid activism in the United States that preceded the FSAM Embassy demonstrations. This chapter provides an overview of black internationalism concerning Southern Africa. The popular media coverage of the latter waves of activism reveals a noticeable decline in popular support for the anti-apartheid movement in the mid-1970s as a result of ongoing media misrepresentation of black liberation ideologies in the United States. However, media coverage of South Africa increased as U.S. anti-apartheid activists began framing their campaigns around symbols of the historic U.S. black freedom struggle.

¹⁹ William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 320-322.

Chapter Three introduces the use of civil rights commemoration activities by anti-apartheid activists as a means to connect the two struggles together based upon the power of moral appeal, which also rendered the armed struggle occurring in South Africa as more palatable to American audiences. The desired effect was a public that reminisced about the non-violent direct action campaigns of the black freedom struggle now envisioned by the U.S. anti-apartheid campaigns against the symbolic centers of the apartheid government. What resulted was a movement message altered to reflect the public's desire for reconciliation and commemoration of this closed chapter of America's civil rights past.

Chapter Four elaborates on the role of television in expanding public awareness of the liberation struggle in South Africa. This chapter examines the use of single-issue news broadcasts and the relatively new medium of pay channel cable as a means of reaching broader audiences of the apartheid struggles. The appearance of single-issue news broadcasts during the late 1970s framed South African activists as leftist guerilla fighters which corresponded with network partisanship concerning issues of black self-determination and Black Nationalism. The tone of network single-issue broadcasts lightened in the mid-1980s, which paralleled a growth in popular support for U.S. anti-apartheid activism. But broadcast coverage relating to South Africa waned after the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. In 1988, *South Africa Now*, a weekly thirty minute series on public television, was created in reaction to the dearth of network coverage in the late 1980s. The series' abrupt end in 1991 and the continued waning of network coverage suggested that U.S. audiences perceived the liberation

struggle was nearing an end, despite increased violence and hundreds of politically motivated killings in South Africa in the years after Mandela's release.

Chapter Five explores the appearance of a genre of feature films and episodic television I am labeling *movement stories*. Movement stories that focused on civil rights and apartheid-era themes emerged in the United States beginning in the late 1970s. What is uncovered is the lack of female-centered activism featured in these movement stories, particularly among black women. The subjugation of black female activism in these both civil rights and apartheid-era films further reinforced the popular male-centered movement memory for audiences.

Chapter Six examines Artists United Against Apartheid (AUAA), a group of recording artists, that politicized the two decade old cultural boycott against South Africa and created a controversial anti-apartheid protest album *Sun City*. At the same time Live Aid and USA for Africa were raising awareness and money for famine relief, the more overtly political AUAA aggressively challenged the Reagan administration's foreign policy of "constructive engagement." The album, a music video, and educational materials made available to teachers by AUAA, were created to raise awareness of the liberation struggle within South Africa. AUAA organizers also wanted to challenge discrimination within the American recording industry by inviting black singers and musicians from under represented genres of music, like jazz and hip-hop, still in its infancy, to perform on the protest album. But, despite the appearance of popular recording artists of the era, *Sun City* being the more radical of the "charity albums" in 1985, received nominal airplay, and did not raise nearly as much as its predecessors. But,

while heralded by the United Nations, AUAA and *Sun City* was largely dismissed by mainstream audiences, which indicated a rejection of the radical themes inherent to the Sun City project. What was revealed was a popular preference for a more moderate style of activism, especially among celebrities.

CHAPTER II

“VERY FERTILE GROUND” THE EARLY WAVES OF U.S. ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM

On Saturday, May 26, 1973, over eighty thousand people gathered in cities across the United States in observance of the second annual African Liberation Day (ALD).¹ Demonstrators gathered to celebrate the “bonds of unity” with their African brothers and sisters in their anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles. Rather than focusing on one or two national rally points, organizers of the ALD’s events wanted participants to gather within their own communities and focus on educational programs, demonstrations, and fund raising activities designed to raise public awareness of the ongoing liberation struggles within Southern Africa. Rather than be laden with the costs associated with travel, as had been the case for the first African Liberation Day, local activists connected with guest speakers, who orchestrated community outreach programs. The ALD events held in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. drew over forty thousand participants the year before. The astonishing number of people who gathered for this transnational event in 1973 reflected an ongoing commitment to black grassroots organizing against institutional racism years after the legislative victories of the civil rights movement.²

¹ For of the development of African Liberation Day see William W. Sales, Jr. *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-America Unity*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 1999); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007).

² An additional twenty thousand gathered in cities in Canada and the Caribbean. The day’s theme was entitled “There is No Peace With Honor ---African People Are At War.”

According to one organizer in Oakland, the day's events were successful not because of the nearly twelve thousand who turned out in just Oakland, but because of the "tremendous number of people who organized and publicized it."³ Despite the impressive attendance numbers, ALD organizers wondered how to continue connecting the liberation struggles in Africa with the ongoing domestic struggles of black Americans. The post-segregation gains for black Americans had receded as national economic woes worsened throughout the 1970s and funding for community programs in urban areas evaporated. Despite the electoral power black Americans had achieved after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, their political capital waned as access gave way to compromise and competing interests from other minority groups. In Atlanta, ALD organizer Rukudzo Mrapa was adamant that the liberation struggles within Africa were connected to the continued struggle for black American economic, political, and cultural power. Mrapa claimed, "Our struggle is one. We cannot afford to see *this* struggle fail. We must not allow this struggle to end on a stage of romanticism."⁴

The 1973 African Liberation Day should have been the culmination of nearly four decades of anti-apartheid consciousness-raising in the United States. Hard-won civil rights battles improved employment, housing, and educational prospects for millions of Americans, but conditions continued to worsen for millions of black South Africans engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 exposed institutional racism of any kind as illegitimate.

³ Gregg Simms, "African Liberation Day Is a Success," *Jet*, June 1973

⁴ "Over 100,000 Observe African Liberation Day," *Chicago Metro News*, June 9, 1973.

But U.S. anti-apartheid activists failed to muster popular support despite decades of similar mobilizing efforts against American foreign and economic policies toward South Africa. Early waves of anti-apartheid activism failed to move the public and policy-makers to demand the end of South Africa's violent retaliation against opposition groups.

This chapter examines early campaigns of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement in the years leading up to the emergence of the influential Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) of the mid-1980s. Studying activists' campaigns and tactics, especially in the decade before the FSAM, exposes a conservative political culture that, by the 1970s, denounced the non-violent civil disobedience of the 1960s as illegitimate. Popular media coverage throughout the 1970s featured internal conflicts within liberation organizations or alluded to a fanaticism within the movement, framing it as a radical fringe dangerous to the United States. Popular opinion shifted toward anti-apartheid activism in the mid-1980s, when solidarity groups curtailed their radical liberation rhetoric and exploited selective popular memories of the domestic black freedom struggle for public consumption. Sanitizing the black freedom struggle meant downplaying radical economic ideologies that challenged the supremacy of capitalism that dominated earlier liberation discourse. An embrace of non-violent civil disobedience that imitated those of the U.S. civil rights past was embraced by U.S. anti-apartheid activists' tactics. This change in rhetoric and protest tactics coincided with the popular media framing of the South African liberation struggle as a series of violent racial dramas where whites brutalized blacks, similar to the way mainstream American audiences understood their own domestic civil rights history. What resulted from this shift was a new wave of anti-

apartheid activism in 1984 inspired by the re-election of President Ronald Reagan. Upon hearing of the re-elections of both President Ronald Reagan and conservative North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, anti-apartheid activist and Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy (D-DC) said that, “This made it very clear to us that traditional means of influencing public policy are not likely to work in the next four years.”⁵ Fauntroy and many other black activists were frustrated over another four years of Reagan’s “constructive engagement” policies toward South Africa. Black activists within TransAfrica decided to abandon their traditional lobbying efforts, which up to that time had proven ineffectual.⁶ This tactical move toward symbolic direct action reinforced the growing national amnesia concerning the radical streams that existed within the civil rights movement that had advanced black economic development, cultural pride, and electoral power in black communities across the United States during the late 1960s and 1970s.⁷

⁵ John Ward Anderson, Karlyn Barker and Michel Marriott, “1960s Tactics Revived For Embassy Sit-Ins,” *Washington Post*, Final Edition, November 29, 1984.

⁶ Assistant Secretary of State Chester Cocker introduced the foreign policy regarding South Africa which became known as “constructive engagement.” The economic and strategic advantages of South Africa were important enough to the United States that diplomatic relations required a careful balance between condemnation and compliance with the racist regime and their institutions.

⁷ Vincent Gordon Harding, “Beyond Amnesia: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Future of America,” *The Journal of American History*, 24, no. 2 (1987): 469.

Historical Overview of U.S Anti-Apartheid Activism

A tradition of international activism within the U.S. black community imparted a wealth of written and oral accounts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sources which included memoirs of missionary trips to the African continent, congress and convention reports, and governmental communiqués, of which all, contributed to the development of a black intellectual tradition concerning racial solidarity among oppressed peoples throughout the Diaspora. Scholars have documented opposition towards the subjugation of non-white South Africans prior to the formal adoption of *apartheid*, events that included the passive resistance campaigns led by Mohandas Gandhi and organizations like the Natal Indian Congress (1894); the African Political (later People's) Organizations (1902); and the Transvaal Native Vigilance Association (1902), whose intent was to bring full citizenship to all peoples of South African regardless of color.⁸ Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, 1907) which assisted in the organizing efforts of the African National Conference (ANC, 1911), informed international resistance to the ongoing

⁸ Fierce, Mildred C, "Selected Black American Leaders and Organizations and South Africa, 1900-1977," *Journal of Black Studies*, 17 (1987): 305-326; Robin D.G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem: Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950,'" *The Journal of American History, The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue*, 86 (1999): 1045-1077; Richard Payne with Eddie Ganaway, "The Influence of Black Americans on US Policy Toward Southern Africa," *African Affairs*, 79 (1980): 585-598; Brenda Gayle Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," *Phylon*, 43 (1982): 125-143; Skinner, Elliot P, *African American and U.S. Policy Toward Africa 1850-1924: In Defense of Black Nationality*, (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Nancy L. Clark and William H Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 18.

political disenfranchisement of black South Africans.⁹ Black American leaders such as Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, and Paul Robeson were instrumental in mobilizing efforts to further connect the black freedom struggle in the United States to a larger Pan-African struggle. As early as 1921, chapters of Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) appeared in areas of Capetown and Johannesburg, to the consternation of the South African Department of Native Affairs.¹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois conferred upon Jan Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa (1919-1924), the distinction of being the embodiment of white nationalism.¹¹ Paul Robeson dedicated his celebrity and activism into co-founding the Council on African Affairs (CAA) in 1937 to end colonialism and promote African self-determination. Robeson and others argued that white control over access to employment and economic advancement ensured a permanent non-white underclass in subservience to the white South African minority. Liberation organizations like the CAA demanded an end to the economic exploitation of black South Africans and endorsed the cessation of American policies (in government and business) that continued to benefit economically from trade with South Africa.¹²

Black disenfranchisement in the United State barred direct influence on American foreign policy in the decades before the passage of civil rights legislation. Black activism

⁹ For NAACP organizational assistance to ANC see Janice Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics*, (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1985), 14.

¹⁰ David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 69.

¹¹ Ibid, 112-113.

¹² For information on the activism of Paul Robeson see: Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography (Lives of the Left)*, (New York: New Press, 2005); Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957*, 115-116; For an overview on the Council on Africa Affairs see: David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

regarding South Africa therefore had to rely upon established “informal” community organizing traditions within the black community to raise popular awareness concerning their brothers and sisters in the struggle. Turning toward “symbolic actions,” black Americans focused on building community support by attempting “to avoid or bypass political systems of the U.S. and foreign policy agents and the European colonial powers dealing with Africa.”¹³ Black internationalists built coalition support by cultivating a network of groups dedicated to liberation struggles in Africa. Activists held Pan African conferences to encourage opposition against colonialism throughout the world. And opposition networks produced educational materials for mass circulation and organized fundraisers, as well as staging demonstrations in support of South Africans. The introduction of *apartheid* challenged the determination of black activists and their supporters to end white supremacist regimes within Africa.

The machinations of apartheid took hold at the same time the perpetrators of the atrocities under Hitler’s ethnically motivated Final Solution were being prosecuted. At a December 1946 protest in front of the South African Consulate in New York City Indian student activist E.S. Reddy and Mrs. A Godiwala came out holding signs that read, “Smuts Pleads ‘Humane Treatment’ for Germans. But NOT for Africans.”¹⁴ The absurdity of Afrikaner Foreign Minister Smuts’ request for fair and “human treatment” of Germans on trial in international courts was not lost on CAA organizers. The presence of former pro-Nazi supporters within South Africa’s new Afrikaner government was evident

¹³ Elliott P. Skinner, *African Americans and U.S. Policy Toward Africa 1850-1924: In Defense of Black Nationality*, (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992), 14

¹⁴ Photograph. December 1946. Private Collection of E.S. Reddy. *African Activist Archive*

in the appearance of a political cartoon in 1948. An outline of Hitler's ghost loomed large over an enormous ball and chain shackled to a map of South Africa. An inscription on the ball read, "Pro-Nazi White Supremacy Nationalists: Dr. Daniel Francois Malan. The New Prime Minister." The cartoon's caption stated, "Hitler's Ghost and Bigger Chains for the Union of South Africa."¹⁵ The linkage of the Afrikaner government to the Holocaust inspired rousing international condemnation.

Black internationalist groups were hopeful when apartheid became of great concern to the newly created United Nations, situated initially in San Francisco. Intent on "transcending" the nationalist aspirations and rivalries that had resulted in global war, the member nations of the growing United Nations were closely monitoring events unfolding in South Africa.¹⁶ Conflicts emerged between black internationalist organizations when the presence of perceived "moderate" leaders was requested as consultants to the U.S. delegates sent to San Francisco. These internal conflicts coupled with the South African National Party's dismissal of international condemnation foreshadowed the decades of obstacles facing anti-apartheid activists and their supporters. As non-white South African economic and political mobility succumbed to apartheid's manipulations American foreign policy surrendered to Cold War anxieties. Activist groups like the NAACP and anti-apartheid groups like the CAA experienced anti-communist purges. Leftist ideologies hostile to the dogmas of capitalism were expelled from activist groups which

¹⁵"Hitler's Ghost and Bigger Chains for the Union of South Africa," Cartoon, *Arkansas State Press*, June 25, 1948.

¹⁶ Paul Boyer, *Promise to Keep: The United States Since World War II*, (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 5.

resulted in devastating casualties among liberation organizations, including the CAA and its co-founder Paul Robeson. Robeson and W.E.B DuBois were barred by their organizations and dismissed by the public as charges of communist subversion were hurled. Robeson argued that his leftist rhetoric was a clear alternative to the racist exploitation inspired by capitalist greed America pursued at home and abroad. The loss of American intellectuals like W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson to Cold War hysterics left a void of American- centered black consciousness in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement.¹⁷ Despite the punishing governmental backlash against U.S. liberation organizations challenging American foreign policy, new networks of anti-apartheid supporters formed in their wake.

The American Committee on Africa (ACOA), an inter-racial organization founded in 1955, became by decade's end the only national organization focused on the liberation struggles of Southern Africa. George Houser, a white Methodist minister, peace advocate and one of the founders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), served as ACOA's executive director from 1955 through 1981. Already well- acquainted with the anti-communist critique hurled at peace and anti-racist organizations like CORE, Houser and ACOA carefully negotiated around the "red label" by mobilizing support for South African campaigns that appeared non-violent and democratic, such as the Defiance Campaign.¹⁸ Additionally, Dr. Melville Herskovits, then chairman of African Studies

¹⁷ Murali Balaji. *The Professor and the Pupil: The Politics and Friendship of W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson*. New York: Nation Press, 2007; Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957*, 155, 180-185.

¹⁸ George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle*, Foreword by Julius Nyerere, (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), 13-14.

Program at Northwestern University, attempted to allay ongoing fears of communist subversion in Africa during a conference at Boston University, where he stated that he was not concerned about Russian economic aid in Africa. Herskovits argued that Africans would never have allowed aid if strings were attached.¹⁹ This careful negotiation around anti-communist hysterics gave ACOA a greater sense of legitimacy among both critics and supporters of the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. While race was a common factor uniting black Americans and South Africans in their struggles for political, social, and economic equality, ACOA focused its attention on becoming a clearinghouse of educational and inspirational information for interested media outlets, government agencies, and networks of supporters. ACOA profited from Houser's connection to American civil rights organizations and national leaders like Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King, Jr. Houser approached community activists and leaders like King, who lent his name on occasion in support of ACOA objectives that included multiracial democracy and a commitment to non-violence. ACOA had international connections and was well situated to publicize Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) activities for King. Using King's name on an ACOA letter further legitimized ACOA's connection to the American civil rights movement, which encouraged U.S. support among civil rights activists and groups formerly hesitant to support ACOA for fear it was a possible front for communists.²⁰

¹⁹ "Dr. Herskovitz Reveals: Reds' Aid to Africa 'No Danger,'" *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 19, 1959.

²⁰ Historian, Lewis V. Baldwin, states that King's association with ACOA also raised his own profile and popularity across the world. Lewis V. Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King Jr. and South Africa*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995). 15-17.

Supporters struggled with their commitment to non-violence as violence against liberation activists in Africa continued to escalate by the end of the 1950s. The Algerian war for independence against France was in its fourth year, an event that prompted the first All-African People's meeting in Accra, Ghana, to conclude that despite the war and escalation of violence in Southern Africa, the delegates fully supported,

...all fighters for freedom in Africa, to all those who resort to peaceful means of non-violence and civil disobedience, as well as to all those who are compelled to retaliate against violence to attain national independence and freedom for the people. Where such retaliation becomes necessary, the Conference condemns all legislations which consider those who fight for their independence and freedom as ordinary criminals.²¹

By 1960, even the most hardened black American activists of the southern civil rights movement were not prepared for the scale of violence that demonstrators in Sharpeville, South Africa, were to endure. Increased bus fares within South Africa led to organized bus boycotts. In response, the South African Parliament passed an act requiring employers to offset a reduction of fares through a monthly transport payment. The passive resistance campaign that had black South Africans walking miles or taking less direct transportation to work resulted in a victory for activists in South Africa, albeit brief.²²

Passbooks, the instruments of physical and economic movement, were required of all non-white South Africans. Passbook management and enforcement agencies became

²¹ "All-African People's Conference: Resolution on Imperialism and Colonialism, Accra, December 5-13, 1958," *All-African People's Conference News Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 4 (Accra: 1959), 1-2.

²² Christabel Gurney, "A Great Cause: The Origin of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959-March 1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26 No. 1 (2000), 125.

gleaming symbols of South Africa's institutional racism as well as sites of an organized campaign of resistance to these new impositions. Opposition over the ideological direction within the African National Congress (ANC), the largest anti-apartheid political organization within South Africa, resulted in a splinter group, the Pan-African Congress (PAC). The PAC focused on a racialized "pan-African socialist" liberation of South Africa rather than an "equality for all" approach as promoted by the ANC and its liberal white supporters. As a means of distinguishing the PAC from the ANC, PAC organizers turned toward more aggressive defiance strategies, which included passbook demonstrations; they hoped these demonstrations would result in mass arrests. They believed Apartheid authorities would negotiate with organizers rather than have local authorities inundated with the logistical nightmare of mass arrests and incarcerations. The PAC's defiance campaign planned for April 1960 required national mass mobilization of black Africans going into police stations without their passbooks expecting to be arrested.²³ What began as a civil disobedience strategy, similar to the "pack the jails" campaigns of the American civil rights movement, turned violent and bloody. When South African police refused to arrest protestors in the small town of Sharpeville, crowds began to gather at the police station. The police aggressively began to disperse the crowds. Tension rising between onlookers, demonstrators, and police resulted in shoving, and someone pushed a police officer to the ground. Police officers opened fire on the unarmed crowd, murdering seventy two people with nearly two

²³ Gurney, 128

hundred wounded.²⁴ Anti-pass demonstrations spread across South Africa in a show of support for those attacked in Sharpeville.

In addition to the incident at Sharpeville, an increase in forced relocations of blacks resulted from the new annexations in Durban and Natal. Nearly two million people were subject to the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act in 1960.²⁵ A great sense of urgency for international support to curb the forced relocations of hundreds of thousands of non-white South Africans culminated in the government's campaign to ban anti-apartheid organizations and their activists, starting with the ANC and PAC. ACOA organized support in the United States for demonstrators through leaflets, brochures, and newsletters. They distributed these educational materials hoping to sway public support in favor of harsher U.S. sanctions against the violent South African government. ACOA and CORE organized a joint demonstration on March 24, 1960. Fifty people picketed in front of the South African Consulate on Madison Avenue for over an hour, then walked inside and delivered a letter protesting the violence in South Africa. Earlier that day the same group of demonstrators picketed an F.W. Woolworth's that had refused to integrate its lunch counters.²⁶ That the organizers planned the two picket lines on the same day revealed their commitment in connecting the domestic and South African liberation struggles together. ACOA continued its consciousness raising and organized a rally in

²⁴ Robert Kinlock Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 63-64.

²⁵ "Sharpeville Crowd 'Not Unarmed,'" *The New York Times*, March 26, 1960.

²⁶ "South Africans 'Out to Lunch' as Shooting is Protested," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1960; Additional demonstrations included AME ministers picketing the South African Consulate and a bomb threat that proved a hoax. "AME Clergy Pickets in N. Y.," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 9, 1960; "South African Consulate Is Victim of Bomb Hoax," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1960.

Harlem, which drew around eight hundred people and raised \$300 in support of their fellow protestors in South Africa.²⁷ Coalition support included members of the New York Council of the Negro American Labor Council, led by famed labor organizer A. Philip Randolph. They arrived at the South African Consulate later that month to protest the South African government's suppression of a work stoppage in Johannesburg.²⁸ The role of ACOA as a clearinghouse of information continued to empower coalition support throughout the 1960s.

The decision of the ANC to move toward an armed struggle in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre did not diminish U.S. activism in the 1960s. Coalitions of trade unionists, churches, and other civic groups organized conferences and campaigns to propose boycotts and to raise funds for defense aid. In 1960, these groups coordinated their activism around a series of resolutions passed by the South African Emergency Campaign. The resolutions covered the ongoing consumer and cultural boycotts against South African products and tourism, as well as more specific topics such as prohibiting the South African government from constructing a pavilion at the New York World's Fair.²⁹ Despite the escalation of the domestic civil rights movement, activists such as labor organizer A. Philip Randolph wanted to unite the emerging black student movement with the trade unionists as a united front against international human rights violations occurring around the world. Randolph was convinced that the black students

²⁷ David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 18.

²⁸ "Negro Labor Group Pickets South African Consulate," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 9, 1960.

²⁹ "S. Africa Boycott Battles Apartheid," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 11, 1960.

who were rising up on college and high school campuses demonstrated the “basic philosophy of the struggle, suffering, and sacrifice” required for victory over evil. He felt the students involved in the sit in movement had become an “advance guard of the Negro Community in the fight for freedom” around the world.³⁰ Trade unionists were resolute in their opposition to South African apartheid. The AFL-CIO Convention in 1961 passed a resolution calling for economic sanctions. ACOA coordinated a one day boycott against the unloading of South African ships with the International Longshoremen’s Association. They sought to raise governmental awareness of the growing economic sanctions movement. Imports from South Africa amounted to nearly \$400,000,000 and U.S. exports amounted to approximately \$700,000,000, which gave the United States a “real stake in South African racism.”³¹

The commitment to the sanctions movement continued to gather support among civil rights activists. The Hunter College Rally held on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1965, had as a keynote speaker Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Also on the bill that day were folk singer Pete Seeger and famed South African singer Miriam Makeba. King noted that South Africa ignored all the “paper resolutions” that the U.S. anti-apartheid movement had issued over the years, and he emphasized that the economic sanctions movement was critical to hurting the South Africa government. King continued with by

³⁰ “A. Philip Randolph Looks at Labor: Rights Revolution Crisis Links Negro Unionists with Struggles of Students,” *New Pittsburg Courier*, April 23, 1960.

³¹ “Apartheid Protest Action Could Stall South African Ship Here,” *New Pittsburg Courier*, October 19, 1963; “South Africa Ship Boycott Action,” Memorandum. October 4, 1963. American Committee on Africa, (African Activists Archive) (Accessed on December 11, 2011); “Action Against Apartheid,” Joint Statement Local 1814 International Longshoremen’s Association, American Committee on Africa, Congress of Racial Equality, (African Activists Archive) (Accessed on December 11, 2011).

remarking, “our protest is so muted and peripheral it merely mildly disturbs the sensibilities of the segregationists, while our trade and investments substantially stimulate their economy to greater heights.”³² The sanctions movement continued to gather recruits from the growing black student movement by decade’s end. The escalation of the anti-war movement gave U.S. anti-apartheid activists additional grounds to unite the struggles in South Africa with the anti-colonial struggle in Vietnam. Activists, like Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged the U.S. government to reconsider their trade with South Africa. In 1964, King delivered a speech in London, en route to accept his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Sweden, wondering why the United States continued to “refuse to intervene” in South Africa. King questioned if it would take a “bloodbath in South Africa – or Korea, or a Vietnam” for the United States “to recognise [sic] the crisis.”³³

Despite the ongoing sanctions movement and consciousness raising activism in the preceding decades, the U.S. anti-apartheid movement had momentarily ebbed by the early 1970s. Anti-apartheid scholars agree the Soweto Uprising that began in 1976 and the death of black consciousness leader Steve Biko inspired greater awareness among the wider public and brought renewed energy and determination to the U.S. anti-apartheid

³² “Address of Dr. Martin Luther King on December 10, 1965 to the South Africa Benefit of the American Committee on Africa at Hunter College, New York City,” (African Activist Archive) (Accessed 14 November 2011).

³³ ACOA Telegram to President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Ambassador Stevenson. American Committee on Africa. (African Activist Archive) (Accessed 11 December 2011); “Sharpeville-Orangeburg-Kent State-Chicago” Ad Hoc Committee for the Support of Southern African Liberation Movements. March 1970. African Activist Archive. (Accessed 11 December 2011). Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Speech on South Africa, December 7, 1964, <http://rfksafilm.org/html/speeches/pdfspeeches/13.pdf>.

movement.³⁴ A new generation of black South African students, raised on the activist struggles within South Africa, defied an older generation of leaders and took to the streets in mass demonstrations against the forced usage of Afrikaans language within their schools. The demonstrations were in response to a series of protracted educational restrictions and ongoing racial tension within the impoverished township of Soweto. Police attacked student protestors with teargas bullets and when this tactic failed to disperse the crowd, they opened fire. Student reactions ranged from fleeing the violence to attacking police with rocks. Protests continued into the next week. After nearly a month of protests the official report noted fifty eight dead and nearly eight hundred wounded; but the residents of Soweto argued the numbers were grossly underestimated.³⁵ Images of youthful protestors under attack appearing in American mainstream newspapers inspired national reflection of the events unfolding in South Africa. Images reminiscent of those from the Deep South were back on American television screens and in newspapers. Youthful faces focused on but defiant of the imminent dangers of police brutality became the visual equivalent of a siren calling activists to “battle-stations.” A new youth movement of student activism within the United States targeted university divestment. Labor unions and black workers, in a show of solidarity, demanded their

³⁴ Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); David. L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Anti-Apartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*; Janice Love. *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics*; William Minter Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb, Jr. *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century, 1950-2000*.

³⁵ Massie, 394-397.

companies cease operating within South Africa or stop providing them with the instruments of apartheid.³⁶

In 1977, the murder of renowned Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko while detained caused the South African government to yield to the international demands for a more thorough investigation of Biko's suspicious death. Three months before Biko's death, the lobbying firm TransAfrica was created by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). The CBC envisioned TransAfrica as a "foreign policy advocacy organization" with the mission of educating both the public and policy-makers about the prevailing social, economic, and political injustices throughout Africa and the Caribbean.

TransAfrica provided detailed accounts of the anti-colonization and liberation struggles within Africa through conventional lobbying efforts and acted as a clearinghouse for educational resources concerning Africa and the African Diaspora. Their educational campaign focused on anti-apartheid networks throughout the United States and forwarded press packets, newsletters, pamphlets, posters, books, t-shirts, speakers' series information, and sponsorship kits to help educate at the local and state and national level. Although the U.S. anti-apartheid movement was highly de-centralized, organizations like TransAfrica, under the leadership of executive director Randall Robinson, became fixtures within the anti-apartheid network within the United States. Local and state organizations appreciated the resources provided by organizations like ACOA and

³⁶ As was the case for Polaroid, where black American workers demanded that Polaroid cease supplying film for Passbook identification photos.

TransAfrica and used them to educate and mobilize support in the years leading up to the Free South African Movement.

Campaigns and Coverage

The decentralized nature of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement meant groups mobilized around single issue campaigns. Solidarity groups in the United States coordinated fundraising campaigns to support South African defense funds for political prisoners and their families and also for groups like the United Democratic Front, which engaged in armed struggles within southern Africa. U.S. anti-apartheid groups that believed continual U.S. investment in South Africa supported the genocide of non-white South Africans coordinated economic campaigns. Divestment campaigns demanded the complete withdrawal of all financial investments from companies doing business within South Africa. The anti-Krugerrand campaign required boycotting the sale, purchase, or trade of Krugerrands, the currency of South Africa. The anti-bank loan campaign demanded American banks cease extending credit to the South African government. Sport and cultural campaigns focused on boycotting South African sporting events and cultural performances. All of these individual campaigns combined were determined to build enough momentum and mobilize enough public support to enforce full U.S. sanctions against South Africa.

As early as 1966, local anti-apartheid groups in New York City utilized educational and information packets, provided by organizations like ACOA and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), to educate their members as well as the

general public about the economic exploitation of millions of non-white South Africans. Activists also coordinated mass demonstrations at bank branches known to extend loans and credit to South African businesses and the apartheid government. Some engaged in “bank runs” or mass bank account closures and encouraged patrons to close accounts in protest of a bank’s “involvement with apartheid.” For example renowned civil rights activist A. Phillip Randolph, chairman of the Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid (CCAA), a local anti-apartheid group located in New York City, campaigned against Chase Manhattan Bank, which reported accounts had been closed and nearly \$15,000 had been withdrawn. Newspaper coverage of these bank run campaigns was initially indifferent toward the activists and their symbolic gestures; most reported on the reactions of the branches and their handling of the protestors. An account of one incident stated, “Three minutes later the bank was jammed with people bent on closing their accounts. In a line outside were 250 supporters. The bank folded its revolving door into an entry divider making two lanes to admit customers.” One protestor actually acknowledged the implied “nuisance” the activists created in the bank, confessing, “We don’t have any expectation whatever of bringing a \$14 billion bank down on its knees.” So, what was the point of their protest? Ideally, they wanted to bring awareness to passersby that First National City Bank had three branches located in South Africa and was “economically helpful to a government that practices socially and morally abhorrent policy of racial separation and repression.”³⁷ By the end of that year the “bank run”

³⁷ “Students Here Stage Bank Run To Protest ‘Apartheid Support,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 1966.

campaign moved on to Chase Manhattan Bank. However, spokespersons at both banks debated the total amount of money the CCAA professed to have withdrawn that year. The media coverage dismissed the posture of the activists involved in the bank-runs rather than report on the systems of exploitation being invested in by American financial institutions.

Targeting specific companies became an effective tactic of individual anti-apartheid groups located near or even in corporate headquarters. One particular site of opposition to corporate investment in South Africa was at the Polaroid Corporation. In the autumn of 1970, workers at the Cambridge, Massachusetts, headquarters discovered that the apartheid government used Polaroid products to create the identity cards that restricted the economic, social, and physical mobility of non-white South Africans. What resulted was the formation of the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM). A campaign slogan embraced the company's technological ethos, "Polaroid imprisons Blacks in just 60 seconds." Nonetheless company officials resisted PRWM demands for the complete withdrawal of Polaroid products used in South Africa.

Instead of ending its business relationship with South Africa, Polaroid turned toward a new "corporate ethic" of doing business in South Africa. The "Polaroid Experiment in South Africa" explored full employment opportunities for black workers; investing in black workers meant providing occupational advancement, improved salaries, and better benefits for all Polaroid employees in South Africa. If Polaroid improved the economic conditions of black employees, then their educational and social conditions outside of the company improved as well. Polaroid thereby divorced itself

from the larger demands for divestment and instead gained support for their new approach to corporate investment.³⁸ Roy Wilkins, the executive director of the NAACP supported American businesses like Polaroid and later General Motors that embraced full employment opportunities for black South African workers. The NAACP's support of continued corporate investment in South Africa became palpable rift between local divestment and liberation groups and the bastion of the black freedom struggle. Polaroid also donated \$20,000 to the Black United Front, a community fund located in Boston, to encourage black advancement. The PRWM viewed this donation as a "corporate publicity stunt" and remained resolute in their campaign to surmount these corporate concessions and continued to push for full divestment. The conflict over divestment was whether or not U.S. companies benefited black workers in South Africa or contributed to their repression. A network of supporters which included "peace, radical and student groups" supported the PRWM boycotts.³⁹ After a six-year boycott against Polaroid products, the company resigned to completely divest from South Africa. The PRWM campaign, with the support of ACOA, brought awareness of apartheid to American executives through public demonstrations and boycotts of Polaroid products. The PRWM and the withdrawal of Polaroid Corporation from South Africa was a significant victory for the divestment campaign.⁴⁰

³⁸ "NAACP Will Aid South African Black," *Wichita Times*, June 15, 1972.

³⁹ Carl W. Sims, "Critics Attack Polaroid 'Experiment,'" *Bay State Banner*. January 21, 1971.

⁴⁰ Morgan, Eric J, "The World is Watching: Polaroid and South Africa." *Enterprise & Society*, 7, no. 3, (2006): 545-546.

Complicating the divestment efforts of anti-apartheid groups was civil rights activist Reverend Leon Sullivan. In 1977 Sullivan, a General Motors (GM) board member, created a set of six principles regarding ethical corporate behavior designed to be adopted by U.S. companies doing business within South Africa. Among the principles were the demand for integrated workplaces, equal pay and opportunities for all workers and training programs, and increased management roles for non-white employees. The Sullivan Principles required U.S. companies to reach beyond the work place and demand improved living conditions for their non-white employees, as well as better transportation and access to better healthcare. The Sullivan Principles became a point of contention among anti-apartheid groups like PRWM that sought the complete disinvestment of American companies from South Africa. Companies that adhered to the Sullivan Principles continued operating in South Africa while working toward “improved” workplace relations and professed a progressive corporate posture. Critics argued that the U.S. corporations that volunteered to adopt the Sullivan Principles did nothing to fundamentally challenge the apartheid structures within South Africa.⁴¹

⁴¹ Jennifer Davis, “Too Little, Too Late: The U.S. Corporation Employment Manifesto for South Africa. *Southern Africa Perspectives*, The Africa Fund. 1977, Issue 3, 1-4. (The African Archivist Archive); TerriAnn Lowenthal and Karen Rothmeyer, “The Sullivan Principles: A Critical Look at the U.S. Corporate Role in South Africa.” *Southern Africa Perspectives*. The Africa Fund, 1979, Issue 6, 1-4. (The African Archivist Archive); ACOA Pamphlet, “The Sullivan Principles: No Cure for Apartheid: A Public Statement,” 1979 (The African Archivist Archive); For an overview of the Sullivan Principles and the significance of a black American influencing significant corporate policy changes see: V.P. Franklin, “The Lion of Zion: Leon H. Sullivan and the Pursuit of Social and Economic Justice.” *Journal of African American History*, 96, (2011): 39-43; Leon H. Sullivan, *Moving Mountains: The Principles and Purpose of Leon Sullivan*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000); James B. Stewart, “Amandla! The Sullivan Principles and the Battle to End Apartheid in South Africa, 1975-1987,” *Journal of African American History*, 96 (2011): 62-89.

The introduction of the Sullivan Principles fragmented the efforts of the anti-apartheid groups. Because of the decentralized nature of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement, some local groups supported the divestment of state funds from any companies that *did not* adopt the Sullivan Principles.⁴² Also, critics accused the divestment movement of a “double standard” when it came to investing in South Africa. After all, South Africa was a Cold War ally, as committed to anti-communism as the United States and, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, “to single out corporations that do business in South Africa for punishments but not those that do business where there are evil regimes is morally inconsistent.”⁴³ That the *Wall Street Journal* identified the Afrikaner government’s apartheid regime as not evil was indicative of the resistance that U.S. anti-apartheid activists encountered.

The sentiment on network broadcasts toward anti-apartheid activism revealed a subtle denouncement of anti-apartheid protestors, including those engaged in the Soweto uprising of 1976. NBC stated youths were “on a rampage” throughout the township and featured footage of black youths throwing stones, bricks, and bottles at the police. The media offered additional footage of black South Africans vandalizing schools, beer halls, and community centers, without placing them in context. Protestors targeted these locations as sites of apartheid’s social and economic repression. One particular wide shot of Soweto during the same NBC broadcast featured the township on fire. The footage

⁴² Influential anti-apartheid groups like ACOA and the Africa Fund rejected the initial six Sullivan Principles as a corporate publicity relations effort meant to silence their opposition. For groups that support the Sullivan Principles see “Let Freedom Reign,” Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee and the African Educational Committee of Connecticut, Inc. *Special Issue Newsletter* June 1980, (The African Archivist Archive)

⁴³ Alan Piper, “Divestment is a Political, Not a Moral Act,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 1986.

was twenty five seconds of billowing clouds of black smoke without narration, an extraordinary length of time for a twenty five minute broadcast. This broadcast focused on the scale of destruction the “youths on a rampage” caused rather than the conditions that drove these young people into action.⁴⁴

On June 22, 1976, Howard K. Smith, co-anchor on *ABC's World News*, offered a scathing commentary regarding “black rioters” in Soweto. Smith attempted to sympathize with the white minority of South Africa and denounced the “dangerous communist involvement” around Soweto that had obviously influenced the actions of the “black rioters.” He challenged black South Africans that demanded back the land the Afrikaners had settled a century earlier. After all, Smith continued, the land in dispute was not taken from anybody since much of the land that the Afrikaner descendants settled was “empty.” Black South Africans, according to Smith, disrespected the “highly successful economy” of the white minority in favor of an economy under an unproven “black rule.” He concluded his one minute and forty second commentary by cautioning against the potential of black rule as it was “apt to be vengeful and destructive.”⁴⁵ Smith and other reporters repeatedly referred to the demonstrations and protests within South Africa as riots, and in one instance stated the residents of Soweto were engaged in “massive anti-white rioting.”⁴⁶ Smith’s assessment was appropriate, considering that the media’s coverage of the U.S. “race riots” were routinely mediated around images of destruction

⁴⁴ *NBC Nightly News*, June 18, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

⁴⁵ *ABC World News*, June 22, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

⁴⁶ *NBC Nightly News*, June 17, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

and violence rather than the underlying causes for protest against the symbols of institutional racism in urban centers.⁴⁷

Conservative William F. Buckley, Jr. used his forum, *The National Review* to criticize the lack of media attention concerning the “black-on-black” violence that resulted from the Soweto riots. While papers around the world featured Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse, a twelve-year-old dying in the arms of his classmate Mbuyisa Makhubu, Buckley wondered where were the images or stories of the black woman who had wielded a stick to ward off rioters accusing Soweto residents of supporting whites. Buckley openly criticized the United Nations’ denouncement of South Africa’s use of force to end the rioting in Soweto. The Watts rioters were ultimately suppressed, Buckley continued, through a use of force. But as he suggested, to criticize the South African government for using “force” to break up lawless rioters was ridiculous.⁴⁸ Despite the networks’ framing of violence and death in Soweto as the result of black rage, the uprising reinvigorated campus and local anti-apartheid groups and inspired new coalitions. On June 26, almost two weeks after the students began their demonstrations in Soweto, *ABC World News* showed twenty seconds of footage of black anti-apartheid activists demonstrating in front of the South African Embassy located in Washington, D.C. They carried picket signs and raised their fist in defiance of the

⁴⁷ For additional examples network broadcasts that used the phrase “black rioting” see: *ABC World News Tonight*, June 18, 1976; *NBC Nightly News*, June 16, 1976; *CBS Evening News*, June 21, 1976 (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive)(Accessed 12 March 2009).; See also “Black Rage,” *Newsweek*, August 23, 1976; Richard Steele with Peter Younghusband, “Death to the White,” *Newsweek* August 23, 1976.

⁴⁸ William F. Buckley, Jr., “A Lesson From South Africa,” *The National Review*, July 23, 1976, 28 Issue 27: 802-803.

racialized violence and apartheid system.⁴⁹ No other networks featured those Embassy protestors or their demonstration.

Despite movement successes like the divestment of Polaroid, solidarity groups were disquieted by a lull in black activism in the early 1970s. Concerns emerged that the movement message of black liberation was waning because of a “tiredness” that appeared to have overtaken the United States. Even church groups found it difficult to mobilize support against budget cuts and the reduction of social programs within the United States. National Council of Churches called A “Convention of Conscience” in 1973 to revitalize an interfaith coalition “reminiscent of earlier days of the civil rights movements.”⁵⁰ Support for upcoming direct action campaigns that included The International African Prisoners of War Solidarity Day and the African Liberation Day were met with concern about “militant black demonstrations.” The black community needed reassurance that these efforts were indeed worthy of support.⁵¹ . A *Chicago Metro News* article, professed “demonstrations are only a tactic, it should remembered, failure to take to the streets should not be taken as an automatic rejection of support.” The black community needed to be reminded of the purpose for liberation demonstrations being organized throughout the nation. The article continued,

⁴⁹ *ABC World News*, June 26, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive.) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

⁵⁰ Milton Coleman, “Old Coalition Faces New Problem,” *Chicago Metro News*, May 15, 1973.

⁵¹ William Raspberry, “Awareness of Africa,” *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1972; Angela Terrell, “Blacks and Africa,” *The Washington Post*, May 23, 1972; “Worthy Cause,” *Chicago Metro News*, May 12, 1973.

The Black Community must be prompted by the heat of fire to melt together with itself, to develop the bodies and mechanisms for the proper meeting of our minds so that every group and individual can begin to see what he is doing in relationship to other persons and organizations. Otherwise, we will constantly run around like babbling, incoherent tower builders and never get anywhere on the construction of our own tower of strength.⁵²

The point of the solidarity campaigns was meant to re-affirm a commitment to the advancement for all people of color. The *Chicago Metro News* had to remind black Americans that, “we fight the same forces of imperialism which oppresses our brothers in South Africa” and encouraged readers to “remember Sharpeville and support their struggle by participating in African Liberation Day and other ongoing programs.”⁵³ The coverage of solidarity groups like the African Liberation Day (ALD) and the All Africa’s People Revolutionary Party (AAFP) reawakened the mass mobilization capabilities that the black community was most admired for during the height of the civil rights movement.

But where black churches struggled to mobilize, black community organizations like African Liberation Day (ALD), the black activist organization inspired by Pan-African consciousness, mobilized nearly sixty thousand demonstrators in over thirty cities in 1971.⁵⁴ The ALD became one of the largest black led movements in the post-civil rights era. By May 29, 1977 at its 5th annual African Liberation Day, the organizing body had changed its name to the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). The

⁵² “Don’t Miss the Point of Protest,” *Chicago Metro News*, March 21, 1973.

⁵³ “Lessons For Blacks On Sharpeville Massacre,” *Chicago Metro News*, March 31, 1973.

⁵⁴ Jordan, Joseph, “The 1970s: Expanding Networks,” *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000*, 126-127.

event drew tens of thousands of demonstrators that poured into the streets of D.C. and denounced “imperialist superpowers” and their control over the African continent. On the same day, a cadre of coalition supporters converged on Lafayette Park to participate in ALD activities and support black majority rule in Africa. Unfortunately, previous internal conflicts over ideological control of the ALSC resulted in splinter groups. On this particular day the ALSC was in conflict with All Africa’s People Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), led by activist Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael). Toure was a polarizing figure within the popular media as a result of conservative attacks against his radical Black Nationalist ideologies. Media coverage indicated that ALSC organizers were wary of Toure’s group and encouraged passersby to attend that ALSC march. They depicted Toure’s group as more concerned about “sending blacks back to Africa” rather than the black struggles in both Africa and the United States. One article acknowledged that all groups at the event were “outgrowths of the 1960s civil rights movement,” but still the reporting focused on the internal tensions between the groups rather than on the broader message of liberation for the world-wide black community.

Spokesmen for the groups present at the ALD events argued that “black left-winged organization[s]” like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers (both groups that Carmichael once helmed), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were relics of the past and “better forgotten in the late ‘70s.”⁵⁵ While this statement was meant to highlight a new

⁵⁵ Cynthia Gorney and Juan Williams, “A Great Day for Rallies: D.C. Parks, Streets Alive with Marchers, Banners, *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1977.

direction of liberation activism, the article omitted any background concerning the liberation struggles occurring in Africa or the connections that these activists were making to the ongoing struggle within American black communities. The article implied that the various movements that converged that day were a cacophony of song, drug use, and entertainment. Participant Lydia Green of Southeast Washington stated that while she was interested in politics, she was more inclined to enjoy the music at the day's event and noted, "I'm here for fun." The article suggested that those participating in the African Liberation Day should not be taken seriously and that included the organizers.⁵⁶

On the same day that the African Liberation Day activities were underway, the *Oakland Post* ran an article entitled "Student Activism is Back the Issues are Black." Divestment activism had been steady on college campuses throughout the 1970s despite the normal "cycling out" of student activists on the college campuses. Student organizations and their supporters realized that additional campaigns linking their movement to material aid campaigns for liberation struggles and anti-racist struggles were necessary to mobilize support in the face of administrative "stone-walling."⁵⁷ The article detailed the activism occurring at various campuses in the University of California system. A crowd nearing eight hundred came out on Berkeley's campus to support a statewide protest of the UC systems' investments in companies doing business in South

⁵⁶ Ibid. While few national papers covered ALD events *The Washington Post* provided minimal coverage even when ALD events in Washington, D.C. routinely drew tens of thousands of people. The black press remained committed and alerted folks to the campaigns the ALD organizers developed as well as ways to get involved. See "African Liberation Committee Seek Aid," *Wichita Times*, May 3, 1973; Milton Coleman, "New Thrust Aims to Halt Imports to Rhodesia," *Chicago Metro News*, July 28, 1973; Carl Turpin, "Which Way for the Liberation Struggle?" *Wichita Times*, May 29, 1975.

⁵⁷ Josh Nessen, "Resurgence in Student Anti-Apartheid Movement," Student Anti-Apartheid Movement Newsletter, American Committee on Africa, December 1979

Africa. The May 29 demonstrations, which included sit-ins, invoking the civil rights activists of the 1960s, took place in college administration buildings on the Berkeley, UC Davis, and UC Santa Cruz campuses. While no Berkeley students were arrested during their call for a general strike to be held the following Friday, nearly 400 at UC Santa Cruz and 18 at UC Davis were arrested. Regents at Berkeley considered the demonstrators more of an annoyance, as one regent reportedly challenged the demonstrators' "assumption that economics was the root cause of the problems in Southern Africa." This regent, not identified in the article, called the assumption "erroneous." Another regent, Charles Fields, was incensed at the student activists who also challenged the recent Supreme Court ruling in the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case.⁵⁸ Demonstrators argued that the institutional inequalities that prevented increased minority admissions were part of the same system that continued to invest in the apartheid system. Regent Fields called the actions of the demonstrators and their accusations "paranoid rantings and ravings that are totally inaccurate." Regent Fields expressed the long-standing sentiment toward student activism that dated back to the early days of the Free Speech Movement, which began on the Berkeley campus and ignited the New Left activism of the 1960s.

⁵⁸ Allan Bakke, a white applicant to the UC Davis Medical School was twice denied admission. After learning that less academically qualified and/or economically challenged "Special applicants" were admitted Bakke sued UC Davis on the basis of reverse discrimination. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mr. Bakke, however students at the divestment demonstrations in May 1977 argued that the Regents were not actively supporting the case in the state courts. Instead of protecting minority admissions and the chance to have more minority doctors in underrepresented areas, students criticized the Regents, saying of their defense of the current admissions policy, "they did not do anything. Gorney, 53.

A noticeable decline in U.S. anti-apartheid activism occurred in the late 1970s. Perhaps the decline resulted from a natural cycle of mobilization in which episodes of intense mobilization were followed by steep decline in interest or intensity.⁵⁹ Student activists cycled out of the college or lost interest, leaving leadership voids among anti-apartheid groups. A “slow-down” in student activism was also attributed to the “stonewalling” by university administrations that student activists in the post-Soweto years had encountered. Student groups had to re-evaluate their grassroots organizing strategies.⁶⁰ Despite the rise in overseas bureaus and an increased presence of international correspondents for U.S. media, the coverage out of South Africa began declining after 1977. In 1977, “South Africa” was mentioned 277 times in national nightly news broadcast segments of ten seconds or longer; by 1982, “South Africa” was only mentioned twenty five times.⁶¹ Economic protests and symbolic gestures of solidarity by U.S. anti-apartheid activists throughout the 1970s followed similar direct action models of the civil rights movement but what jeopardized their momentum during the 1970s were news stories regarding acts of sabotage “terrorism” coming out of South Africa.

On January 25, 1980, *ABC World News* reported on a hostage incident in a suburb of Pretoria. Three black gunmen “stormed” a local bank, took twenty five hostages and

⁵⁹ David S. Meyer, “Civil Disobedience and Protest Cycles,” *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, eds. Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1999), 268-271.

⁶⁰ Student Anti-Apartheid Movement Newsletter, December 1979 (Aluka Database) (Accessed on 12 July 2010).

⁶¹ Content analysis data compiled at the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. (Access 11 March 2009).

demanded the release of political prisoners. The gunmen killed two of the hostages and wounded eleven more before police killed the gunmen. Violence against the hostages separated this incident from previous acts of “black terrorism” within South Africa. This “particular act of terrorism,” according to anchor Peter Jennings, “cannot help but concern the minority White community,” the implication being that while this type of violence toward whites was unique, the incidences of “black terrorist activities” were pervasive within South Africa.⁶² Coverage of “black-on-black” violence escalated on television. The internal conflicts between the political factions of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (Inkatha) within South Africa became more brutal. The news coverage of *necklacing*, placing a rubber tire around an individual’s neck, filling it with gasoline, and then igniting it challenged the “freedom” and “human rights” angles of the international anti-apartheid campaigns. Security Force crackdowns increased as did footage of the acts of sabotage, such as bombings of power plants and shopping centers by those persons engaged in the armed struggle.⁶³ National sympathy was hard to win during those later years of the 1970s. Increased violence in South Africa coincided with a rising conservative backlash against affirmative action, busing, and welfare rights, all of which was cause for community alarm in the U.S.

The growing conservative tenor of the United States during the late 1970s rendered the civil disobedience strategies that anti-apartheid activists used for political

⁶² *ABC World News*, January 25, 1980. *ABC News Transcripts* (LexisNexis Academic).

⁶³ *ABC World News*, June 2, 1980. *ABC News Transcripts* (LexisNexis Academic); “Black Rage.” *Newsweek* August 23, 1976.

change less effective than in the past.⁶⁴ Cold War conservatism viewed the antics of anti-apartheid activists and black liberation rhetoric in support of majority rule as radicalism beyond the scope of serious reflection. Earlier economic campaigns had not brought about full sanctions toward South Africa or forced the National Party to concede that the end of apartheid was imminent. The U.S. government continued to oblige the South African government's requests for military equipment, scientific and technological information, and heavy equipment for manufacturing. Each of these concessions was deemed a necessary weapon in South Africa's larger war against communism and its threat to white minority rule. Of greater concern to the new Reagan administration of the early 1980s were the Cuban troops in Angola. South Africa allowed the U.S.-backed National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA) to stage raids into Angola from its controlled territories in Namibia. "Constructive Engagement," according to Reagan, was necessary for moderating apartheid through diplomacy and securing assistance from South Africa regarding regional conflicts.⁶⁵ Despite localized coverage of anti-apartheid demonstrations, television broadcast coverage of the increased violence within South Africa, and the growing network of anti-apartheid support, the U.S. movement was still unable to effect policy changes. However by the mid-1980s one campaign would take the U.S. anti-apartheid movement from "a local to national story."

⁶⁴ For additional insights into how the media and activists contribute to the framing of individuals and movement identities see Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003).

⁶⁵ Pach, 83-84.

Mainstreaming the movement

The anti-apartheid campaign most successful at connecting the liberation struggle within South Africa to the public was the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM). On Wednesday, November 21, 1984, activists departed from the offices of TransAfrica, a lobbying firm in Washington D.C. and headed to the South African Embassy, a site often targeted by anti-apartheid groups. A meeting with South African Ambassador Fournie had been scheduled the week before. Meeting with Ambassador Fournie were U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, D.C. Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy (D), Georgetown Law Professor Eleanor Holmes Norton, and executive director of TransAfrica Randall Robinson. Upon arrival at the South African Embassy, introductions were made and the activists demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners in South Africa. Among the prisoners were Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu of the African National Congress, both having been in prison over twenty years. The four activists also sought the release of thirteen trade unionist leaders recently detained by South African Security Forces. After a forty-minute discussion with Ambassador Fournie, the FSAM members indicated they would not leave the Embassy. They chose instead to sit-in until their demands were met. The police were notified but not before FSAM member Dr. Norton left the Embassy, signaled the cadre of supporters waiting outside, and contacted the media. The three remaining FSAM members were then arrested then escorted out of the Embassy to face a line of demonstrators chanting “South Africa will be free; Mandela will be free,” and “Sanctions Now,” “One Person, One

Vote.” Sylvia Hill, a member of the steering committee that arranged the protest, stated that both the domestic and international press had arrived in time to see the three activists depart the Embassy. She noted, “as the protestors sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ in the spirit the civil rights protestors of the 1950s and 1960s, the handcuffed protestors were led away to the paddy wagons.”⁶⁶

Scholars of U.S. anti-apartheid activism agree that the FSAM Embassy protest reinvigorated the U.S. anti-apartheid movement and encouraged new activism across the country. However what is omitted from the current literature concerning the Embassy protest is why this particular act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy captured national attention. This Embassy demonstration was far from the first civil disobedience campaign, nor was it the largest. Over four decades of anti-apartheid marches, sit-ins, teach-ins, picket-lines, and boycotts had occurred around the nation. And successful divestments from universities and corporations were gaining momentum. But unlike previous campaigns, the FSAM was purposely created to resurrect the spirit of the civil rights movement, a movement revered for its unambiguous morality and charismatic leadership. The FSAM campaign harkened back to the days when the black church inspired grassroots activism and religious leaders led a moral crusade against racial injustice. Ironically, the FSAM was not organized by ministers, nor was it headquartered in a church. The FSAM was created in the offices of TransAfrica, a lobbying firm in Washington, D.C. and was organized by a radical black internationalist.

⁶⁶ Hill, Sylvia. *The Free South Africa Movement*. www.anc.org.za/un/conference/shill.html. Accessed August 30, 2009.

Cold war hysterics of the 1950s had diminished enough by the 1970s that anti-colonial rhetoric and advocacy groups criticizing American foreign policy were less susceptible to anti-communist purges. Post-civil rights advances in electoral power and educational opportunities contributed to a growing black professional leadership that came of political age during the late 1960s. Among them was Randall Robinson. Robinson's educational experiences at Harvard Law School introduced him to the early campus divestment activism of the late 1960s. Introduction to the radical writing of Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, and W.E.B. DuBois along with information from groups like ACOA exposed him to the anti-colonial struggles throughout Africa. In the 1970s, during his own travels through Tanzania and South Africa, Robinson was further exposed to the plight of the black majorities under white minority regimes. While working for Congressman Charles C. Diggs (D-D.C), Robinson's education on foreign policy matters increased exponentially and eventually black leaders supported his appointment as executive director of TransAfrica, an "African-American foreign policy advocacy organization."⁶⁷ In 1977 TransAfrica provided a voice for black Americans to speak out on foreign policy matters, of which apartheid became a significant target despite the formal lobbying structure and traditional political means of influencing policy changes, TransAfrica yielded limited results with respect to South Africa by 1984.⁶⁸

The frustration felt by activists and the re-election of Ronald Reagan in 1984 left Robinson and others feeling desperate. Supporter Gay McDougal, a human rights lawyer,

⁶⁷ Randall Robinson, *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1988), 64, 96.

⁶⁸ Hostetter, 65-93.

stated, “We tried everything else” including the “traditional lobbying effort.” The decision was made within TransAfrica that a form of civil disobedience was needed and with people of stature. The first part of the TransAfrica campaign was to stage a sit-in and get the participants arrested. The second and most important part was to ensure that the arrested demonstrators were taken out of the Embassy, in handcuffs, in front of cameras where the FSAM was to be announced. Members of the FSAM campaign “strategized to take over that moment in history.”⁶⁹ Organizers specifically chose the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to stage the demonstration, thereby ensuring wider media coverage over the holiday.⁷⁰ On the Friday after Thanksgiving the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) was launched. The initial arrests and subsequent release of the activists started a yearlong demonstration outside of the South African embassy. During that year, police arrested over four thousand protestors and the apartheid campaign moved into living rooms across the nation.

TransAfrica decided to turn toward a series of symbolic civil disobedience strategies to garner public support. Symbolic arrests were carefully orchestrated to keep the media spotlight on the “power of moral appeal”; the FSAM wanted the public to link their anti-apartheid activism with that of the historic civil rights movement. After years of “looking for lightning to strike,” as the *Washington Post* described it, “the right issue at

⁶⁹ *Have You Heard From Johannesburg. Episode: Apartheid and the Club of the West*. Director Connie Fields, Clarity Films, Distributed by California Newsreel, 2008.

⁷⁰ Staging civil disobedience tactics which encourage widespread media attention was a critical component of the modern civil rights movement. See Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The South Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Struggle for Economic Justice*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

the right time to revive the moribund civil rights movement” had finally hit.⁷¹ The shift away from “lobbying and shaping legislation” toward direct action was necessary, as Robison explained, “the circumstances in South Africa and the support of this country have demonstrated that a direct action is necessary,” and that it was up to activists to “cultivate an American understanding and sympathy for those who suffer much in South Africa.” Robinson continued by stating that black leadership at the time had “reached a point where it is willing to return to those measures that produced results in the past.”⁷² Robinson and FSAM members targeted the popular memory of the civil rights movement and the results that the direct action campaigns produced. Protestors peacefully picketed the Embassy, engaged in sit-ins, and marched together as they sang freedom songs that captured the nostalgia of the civil rights movement.

The presence of civil rights celebrities like Coretta Scott King and Rosa Parks, who joined the ranks of protestors in front of the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C., imparted a historic legitimacy to the FSAM and helped inspire everyday citizens to get arrested.⁷³ Though four thousand demonstrators were arrested in Washington, D.C., there was not a single incident of police harassment or brutality reported. Instead, “the police were helping the hundreds of demonstrators orchestrate their sit in...” and eventually all charges were dropped.⁷⁴ This was light years away from the conditions that

⁷¹ Juan Williams, “Black Leaders Find a Hot New Issue: ‘Free South Africa’ Protests Revive a Moribund Movement,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1984.

⁷² Courtland Milloy, “Black Form ‘Free S. Africa Movement,’” *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1984.

⁷³ Interview with Cecelie Counts in *Have You Heard From Johannesburg. Episode: Apartheid and the Club of the West*.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

faced civil rights protestors in places like Birmingham, Augusta, and Jackson in the early 1960s or in Washington D.C. in 1968 after Dr. King's assassination. Upholding a conservative interpretation of the domestic black freedom struggle reinforced a popular memory concerning the civil rights movement that delegitimized the achievements and tactics of the radical liberation philosophies that also inspired the civil rights movement.

Even with the initial media blitz that surrounded the FSAM campaign, the growing network of anti-apartheid activists had competition from other transnational movements. In 1982, the Nuclear Freeze movement staged, at the time, the largest demonstration in United States history. Over 750,000 people marched through New York City's Central Park to demand an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. Local activists exerted considerable control on local and state elections. Freeze advocates campaigned for political resolutions on local ballots and demanded that a candidate's platform addressed Nuclear Freeze, extremely significant to the movement's mobilization. But convincing politicians to lend more support to an anti-nuclear platform was extremely difficult when fears of communist revolutions within "America's backyard" dominated foreign policy discussions. Beginning in 1979, civil war broke out in Nicaragua resulting in the communist Sandinistas' control of the government. U.S. military and economic aid was supplied to anti-communist groups (and was a mainstay of American foreign policy since the Truman Doctrine) throughout Central America. Human rights groups like Amnesty International, Witness for Peace, and Sanctuary mobilized support for refugees and Central American exiles. Faith-based groups stressed the immorality of U.S intervention in Central America, because the

military and economic aid to fight communism resulted in death squads and disappearances of thousands.⁷⁵ Demonstrations against President Reagan's embargo on Nicaragua as a result of the Sandinista takeover stood in direct contrast to what a Knoxville citizen group argued were the Administration's "skewed priorities."⁷⁶

Regardless of the massive demonstrations and the media coverage the Freeze movement received, the group's success at convincing policy-makers that nuclear weapons were bad was its Achilles Heel. Where Nuclear Freeze activists insisted that the presence of nuclear weapons encouraged a nuclear outcome, President Reagan carefully argued that an *absence* of U.S. nuclear weapons would assure nuclear war and the destruction of the United States. Reagan's coup d'état over "anti-nukers" was his appropriation of an "anti-nuclear war" platform that still provided for a secure world.⁷⁷ How were Freeze activists supposed to challenge a president that articulated a "nuclear-free," albeit not weapons free, world?

⁷⁵ U.S. involvement in Central American dates back to the Progressive era. Region conflicts throughout much of the twentieth century resulted from entrenched dictatorships and economic corruption. Rebel groups united in their struggle to purge their nations' of these fraudulent leaders, formed revolutionary armies throughout Central American supported by Soviet-Cuban communist aid. Hector Perla, Jr., "Si Nicaragua Vencio, El Salvador Vencera: Central American Agency in the Creation of the U.S. Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement," *Latin American Research Review*. 43, no. 2, (2008): 136-158.

⁷⁶ "Mall Critics Pan South Africa, Nicaragua Trade Policies," May 7, 1985 Press release. Ad hoc committee from various Knoxville citizen groups that drew approximately seventy protestors for a thirty minute vigil and then a walk to the Federal Building to present Congressional aids with a policy statement.

⁷⁷ An increase in communist back rebellions within developing nations (Central America, Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia) renewed anxieties between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration's foreign policy towed the same Cold War containment policy as his predecessors. But the Reagan administration rescinded the policy of détente his Republican predecessor, Richard Nixon, negotiated. A return to American military superiority would mean a proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. David S. Meyer and Thomas R. Rochon, "The Nuclear Freeze in Theory and Action," *In Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze*. eds. Thomas R. Rochon and David S. Meyer, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 1-17.

The movement message of Nuclear Freeze became confused; some Freeze advocates refused to give up on a truly “nuclear-free” world. Some advocates tempered their demands or worked within splinter groups that focused on arms reduction; others moved on to new issues, such as anti-intervention in Central America.⁷⁸ But the anti-interventionist groups had a complicated movement message as well. Critics argued that stopping U.S. intervention assured thriving communist governments in Central America. The anti-war protestors of the Vietnam era experienced significant setbacks. The anti-interventionists argued the same policies that failed in Vietnam were being enacted by the Reagan administration in Central America. This discourse unfolded during a cultural moment when America came to terms with its complicated public memory of Vietnam and wanted to push beyond the policies and celebrate the service and sacrifice of the war’s veterans. So when famed civil rights pioneers showed up in picket lines in front of a South African Embassy, it was difficult to ignore the anti-apartheid movement message the FSAM promoted. Sanford Gotlieb, director of the United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War, explained the FSAM’s movement message, “South Africa is as perfect a moral issue as you find.” Gotlieb continued stating, “It’s black versus white, and there are images on TV every day to confirm it.”⁷⁹ A clear and relatable movement message mainstreamed the anti-apartheid movement beginning in November 1984.

⁷⁸ David Cortright and Ron Pagnucio, “Transnational Activism in the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign.” *In Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze*, 90-93.

⁷⁹ “Puzzling Over the Change Frustrated Anti-Nukers A Little Envious of the ‘Perfect Moral Issue,’” *College Press Service*, May 9, 1985.

The public and policy-makers took notice. Two years after the FSAM took to the sidewalks, the U.S. Congress successfully overturned, for the first time, a Reagan veto concerning a Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which implemented full sanctions against South Africa. Sustained activism had finally secured enough national support to demand significant policy change. After this victory, anti-apartheid networks turned their sites on the symbol of resistance, Nelson Mandela. His freedom, it was believed, would be the end of apartheid. Staging anti-apartheid demonstrations to commemorate civil rights victories further linked these two movements together. By purposely engaging the civil rights model, the U.S. anti-apartheid movement reinforced a national civil rights narrative based upon a conservative anti-racist, morally unambiguous message; they developed a popular civil rights memory devoid of radical anti-capitalist rhetoric that had once inspired civil rights and liberation advocates alike. Nor was the popular memory encouraged to question the inherent economic structural problems that remained after the symbolic victories had been achieved.

CHAPTER III

“TOWARD A BELOVED NARRATIVE”

**U.S. ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM AND THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN
LUTHER KING, JR.**

South Africa is about like the South, give or take 30 years, and all it needs to solve its race problem is a little moral vision and a Martin Luther King. That is the way many Americans see it.¹

In the spring of 1986 the Anti-Apartheid Support Group (AASG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill organized a joint action with the United Students Against Apartheid from nearby Duke University. The two organizations planned their “Joint Action Against Apartheid and US Racism and Oppression” for April 4, 1986, “in honor of Dr. King’s memory.” The action was organized “within Dr. King’s understanding of institutional oppression” and was designed “in the tradition of direct non-violent confrontation of the power structure that Dr. King exemplified.”² The two groups planned their joint action to coincide with the anniversary of Dr. King’s assassination, which was typical of U.S. anti-apartheid organizations prior to the

¹ Roy Reed, Editorial *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, January 5, 1986.

² “Joint Action Against Apartheid and US Racism and Oppression, April 4, 1986,” *Anti-Apartheid Support Group of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1980-1987*. Folder 1. (Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.) (Accessed 10 October 2009).

establishment of a nationally recognized federal holiday in his honor.³ The decentralized nature of the anti-apartheid movement meant that grassroots organizations were free to interpret King's legacy as moral crusader for social justice and critic of capitalist structures that exploited millions. These local anti-apartheid groups relied upon nationally known groups like the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and TransAfrica for guidance. The literature prepared by ACOA and distributed to local and campus organizations offered a sanitized image of Dr. King emerges. The campus protests and mass mobilization around the South African Embassy demonstrations, which began in late 1984, corresponded with a groundswell of popular support that chose to memorialize Dr. King rather than lament his unfulfilled radical agenda. Eventually a popular narrative emerged in the mid-1980s concerning the U.S. black freedom struggle, which lauded a message of integration and evaded King's radical messages of political and economic change. King's unwavering commitment to non-violent direct action as the only legitimate means toward social change was, to many after his assassination, futile. The tragedy of King's death in April 1968 inspired a dramatic shift toward radical activism for younger activists frustrated with the pace of change within the Civil Rights

³ The Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday was signed into law on November 3, 1983 by President Ronald Reagan. Historian Gary Daynes argues that after King's assassination two styles of honoring King emerged. A tributary style which required "public avowals of fealty" by activists engaged in activism such as the SCLC which appeared to honor a radical King from 1966 to 1968. A memorial style focused on honoring King through "mass education toward racial unity;" a style Mrs. Coretta Scott King was particularly fond of and stood closer according to Daynes to the image of King from 1963-1964. Gary Daynes, *Making Villains, Making Heroes: Joseph R. McCarthy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Politics of American Memory*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1997), 47-81.

Movement.⁴ King's assassination had ignited support for Black Power and Black Consciousness rhetoric which later found outlets in the African liberation activism throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. King's tactic of non-violence managed to prevail despite the escalation of violence and racial exploitation in places like Philadelphia, Newark, and Chicago. The Free South Africa Movement's (FSAM) strategy to "resurrect" non-violent civil disobedience reflected a resurgence of the non-violent tactics embraced by civil rights activists made popular just two decades earlier. But how much of King's legacy embraced by the U.S. anti-apartheid movement became sanitized for public consumption throughout the 1980s?

This chapter examines the use of Dr. King's legacy and civil rights commemorations by a transnational movement. Actions inspired by the U.S. anti-apartheid movement reinforced the construction of a popular civil rights "grand narrative."⁵ Two popular narrative threads regarding the historical civil rights past emerged during this period of U.S. anti-apartheid activism. The first emphasized movement objectives centered on a narrow "integrationist" posture. The second narrative thread created a predilection for concentrating the histories of each movement on a "great black man" narrative. Anti-apartheid organizations mobilized support around the legacy

⁴ See Carson for details about internal struggle between SNCC activists concerning the commitment to non-violent direct action campaigns in the South. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, with a New Introduction and Epilogue by the Author, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); See Marable for insight into how black nationalists regarded King's assassination as yet another indication that "white capitalist American had no intention of resolving racial conflicts, 'nonviolently'." Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006.*, 3rd ed., (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 103-111.

⁵ I am using Kathryn L. Nasstrom's definition of the civil rights "grand narrative" that at its core embraced the themes of American idealism, progress, and racial reconciliation. Kathryn L. Nasstrom, "Between Memory and History: Autobiographies of the Civil Rights Movement and the Writings of Civil Rights History," *The Journal of Southern History*, LXXIV, no. 2, (May 2008),: 329-330.

of King through a narrow or selective use of the civil right past. As a result U.S. anti-apartheid campaigns centered on symbolic protests, and the U.S. activists and their supporters missed out on a valuable opportunity to publicly address lessons learned from civil rights casualties and unfulfilled movement objectives.⁶ This selective memory by the U.S. anti-apartheid movement coincided with the popular commemoration of historic civil rights moments such as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the Birmingham and Selma campaigns. The mainstream media coverage that surrounded both the U.S. anti-apartheid movement and the commemoration activities around these anniversaries reinforced a sanitized popular memory of the domestic black freedom struggle by the late 1980s.

Commemoration activities have served a critical need after moments of great national tragedy and social upheaval. Much has been written about the tragedies of war and the missions of reconciliation through commemoration activities, monument construction and the preservation of sacred spaces.⁷ The emancipation of millions of slaves in the post bellum period along with the influx of millions of immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century became catalysts for the controls that transformed “un-

⁶ Among the increased media coverage of the Free South African Movement’s Embassy campaign there is not a single reference the shrinking social services in urban places like Washington, D.C. where the campaign was taking place.

⁷ David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory & the American Civil War*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory*. (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003); Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape*, (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003).

American identities into those of compliant citizens with shared values.”⁸ The recent scholarship on civil rights memory is invaluable to scholars of contemporary movements.⁹ The media framing of the civil rights era has also emerged, to borrow a term from cultural historian Alison Landsberg, as a “prosthetic memory.” A great majority of Americans did not actively participate in the civil rights movement or its opposition. Instead the public experienced the domestic black freedom struggle as a memory “produced by an experience of mass-mediated representation.” The commodification of mass and popular media representations of past movement events allowed those who had not personally experienced directly the violence or degradation of racial discrimination to instead use the prosthetic memories of the movement to promote a sense of “empathy and social responsibility.”¹⁰ When media coverage of the liberation struggle in South Africa increased, the mediated images inspired activists in the United States. As television coverage of U.S. anti-apartheid activism increased in the mid-1980s, audiences experienced the anti-apartheid movement through the mediated imagery, often in the form of a blended prosthetic memory of the civil rights movement. U.S. anti-apartheid marches and demonstrations, which included well-known civil rights figures,

⁸ Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, (New York: Knopf, 1991), 12.

⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movements and the Political Use of the Past,” *Journal of American History*, 91 (March 2005): 1233-63; Leon F. Litwack, “Fight the Power?” The Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement. *Journal of Southern History*, LXXB, no. 1, (February 2009): 3-28; Kathryn L. Nasstrom, “Beginnings and Endings: Life Stories and the Periodization of the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Journal of American History*, 86, no. 2 Rethinking History and the National Debate: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study: A Special Issue, (September 1999): 700-711; Robert Washington, “Reclaiming the Civil Rights Movement, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 9, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 459-473

¹⁰ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 20-22.

strengthened this blended prosthetic memory. The inclusion of U.S. anti-apartheid activism organized around dates significant to the black freedom struggle reinforced the blended prosthetic memory concerning non-violent direct action as the only legitimate means for political, economic, and social change.

The effectiveness of the blended prosthetic memory meant the public had to possess a collective memory of the civil rights past in order to connect the domestic movement to the liberation struggle in South Africa. During the 1980s, movement literature, scholarship, films, and documentaries like the *Eye on the Prize* series informed the public of their civil rights past. What resulted from the wealth and availability of sources from national civil rights organizations and their leadership was an early scholarship focused from the “top-down.”¹¹ Two central themes emerged in this early scholarship. The first featured a heroic Martin Luther King Jr. or “Great Black Man.” The second theme held the movement to a posture of integration and non-violent triumphalism. Biographies about Martin Luther King Jr. were abundant, but with good reason as King’s involvement became the impetus for a periodization of the civil rights movement.¹² Scholars used King’s mobilizing achievements that began in Montgomery and his tragic death in Memphis as bookends of the civil rights movement. Public histories lauded Kings’ influence over major episodes of the movement with each episode

¹¹ Lawson, Steven F, “Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of American History*, 96 (April 1991): 456-457

¹² Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*, (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. 1988); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1986).

such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom solidifying his iconic stature in America's collective memory.

Civil rights scholarship did evolve in the 1980s and coincided with the mass mobilization of the anti-apartheid movement. The new scholarship included more localized studies which included the voices of grassroots activists that went beyond focusing on the national leadership.¹³ This "bottom-up" approach to the movement yielded a remarkable change in ideological as well as regional perspective. By the mid-1990s the movement was no longer confined to King's philosophies or to the South.¹⁴ But a systematic decline of "heroic interpretations" of civil rights activism meant that more complex narratives which discussed compromise and failures was offered up to challenge a beloved narrative of a sanitized King.¹⁵ A conservative backlash during the late-1980s against new or "revisionist" histories suggested that the public had a definite stake in what was coming out of the academies.¹⁶ How accurate the civil rights scholarship had been was largely left to the activists and scholars of the movement to determine. The public's demand to reflect upon and celebrate the victories of the black freedom struggle, especially during contentious periods of economic and social tension,

¹³ For local studies see William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Aldon D. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, (New York: The Free Press, 1985).

¹⁴ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origin of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Harding, *Beyond Amnesia: Martin Luther King, Jr.*; Harding, *The Inconvenient Hero: Martin Luther King*.

¹⁶ Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996).

made the popular memory of civil rights became particularly vulnerable. The collective civil rights memory had to withstand the desires of activists, their adversaries, and the public's own desires for a narrative of hope and reconciliation. Despite the changes in the civil rights scholarship that began looking from the bottom up, the "Great Black Man" narrative continued to dominate the public memory and an integrationist theme was repeatedly reinforced by anti-apartheid activists commemorating King as a convenient hero and moral guide for their brand of transnational activism. Later, the charismatic Archbishop Desmond Tutu acted as the living embodiment of King. The release of famed political activists Nelson Mandela's from nearly twenty-seven years in prison read as a messianic figure for civil rights in South Africa.

The lack of widespread public support for U.S. anti-apartheid activism prior to the Embassy demonstrations in the mid-1980s meant previous campaigns (e.g. bank runs, campus sit-ins) had largely been discounted as effective strategies to shift popular opinion. The public's definition of non-violent civil disobedience as an effective protest tool depended largely on the opposition's reaction to the protestors.¹⁷ The more brutal the opposition was, as in Birmingham, Selma, and Soweto, towards the protestors, the more legitimate their struggle appeared. Movement scholars have argued that public sympathies toward the civil rights activists increased after the initial media coverage of the brutality inflicted on the demonstrators which stimulated mass mobilization.¹⁸ An

¹⁷ *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, eds. Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Richard Flacks, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*, (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. 1988); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1986); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is*

ironic problem emerged for the U.S. anti-apartheid movement; opposition to the anti-apartheid movement did not take the same form of brutality that had rendered civil rights activists as heroic. Also, U.S. activists supported the tactic (if not the ideology) of non-violence which stood in direct contrast to the South African activists' embrace of the armed struggle.¹⁹ This is not to suggest that U.S. anti-apartheid activists did not encounter danger. Protests over shantytown construction on the campuses of Dartmouth University, UC Berkeley, and UNC Chapel Hill led to vandalism by a sledgehammer wielding opposition. Shantytowns were constructed on U.S. college campuses around the nation to raise awareness of the dire living conditions that resulted from the forced relocations of black South Africans under apartheid. The shantytowns raised the ire of a conservative opposition on college campuses. The opposition was angered over administrations yielding to public pressures over divestment, campus defacement, and what many conservatives believed was an inherent hypocrisy of singling out and criticizing a U.S.

Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, with a new Preface, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Jasper, James M, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); David S. Meyer, "Civil Disobedience and Protest Cycles," *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, eds. Jo Freeman and Victorian Johnson, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1999), 268-269; Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*, (New York: Vintage, 2006).

¹⁹ The conflict over non-violence as a viable tactic in South Africa is well documented by comparative historian George Fredrickson. He argued that the South African activists' turn toward the armed struggle in the early 1960s failed as the campaign. Movement leadership was either imprisoned, banned, forced into exile or murdered in the case of Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) leader Steve Biko as a result of the armed struggle. The armed struggle according to Fredrickson fragmented the movement, created mobilization obstacles, and prolonged the violent oppression from the apartheid government. George M. Fredrickson. *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. George M. Fredrickson. *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

ally in the global fight against communism.²⁰ Shantytown organizers faced a series of arrests that stemmed from trespassing and resisting arrest. The UC Berkeley campus was once again rocked by violence as police from two outside agencies clashed with shanty demonstrations in April 1986. Over ninety arrests were made and twenty-nine people injured after protestors refused to leave the shantytown, “pelted the police with rocks, bottles, eggs and bricks.”²¹ The threat of violent backlashes against the national anti-apartheid movement in the United States was rare despite opposition from and resistance to police arrests during the shantytown demonstrations. Over four thousand arrests were made during the yearlong South African Embassy demonstration in Washington, D.C., and not a single incident of police brutality was reported. U.S. anti-apartheid activists therefore relied on more “symbolic” acts of protest, intended to encourage wider public support. As a result so meant anti-apartheid activists had to be selective in their choices of how best to link the liberation struggle in South Africa to the American civil rights past. Which movement moments or persons were most likely to resonate with the American public as authentic? Where and when to carry out an anti-apartheid demonstration also spoke not only to the logistics of mobilizing supporters but also presented an opportunity for activists who had struggled to make symbolic connections to the collective memory of the historic civil rights movement.

²⁰ Sarah A. Soule. “The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest. *Social Forces*. Vol. 74, No. 3. (March 1997), 855-882. Jon Wiener. “Divestment Report Card: Students, Stocks and Shanties.” *The Nation*. 11 October 1986. 337-340.

²¹ “National Day of Protest Against Apartheid Draws Mostly Small Crowd,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 7, 1986

The anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death offered an opportunity for activists to parallel the tragic circumstance of his assassination with the violent opposition of the apartheid government. An April 4th date offered campus anti-apartheid groups the opportunity to plan out spring campaigns.²² Often groups organized two weeks of activism that began with commemorating the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre at the end of March, which then culminated in early April with the anniversary of King's assassination.²³ Among the coordinated events during these "National Weeks of Actions" were scheduled guest speakers like John Stockwell, an ex-CIA agent stationed in Angola and a representative from the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Jazz musicians, drum circles, movies, and poetry readings rounded out the week of protest. The campus campaigns both acknowledged the symbolic importance of King and his campaign for peaceful non-violence and through memorial services lamented his tragic death as a "fallen hero" in the struggle.²⁴

Early university divestment campaigns were most prevalent on the anniversary date of King's death as a means of connecting the liberation struggles in South Africa and

²² The Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter issued between 1979 to 1985 sponsored by the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) often cited April as the last month of the Spring semester for sponsored events. Aluka Database. (Accessed 6 June 2008).

²³ Often activities were planned on dates that surrounded the anniversary of King's death. April 6, 1983 was coordinated as National Armband Day in honor of the Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death and Solomon Mahlangu a former ANC member who was hanged in 1979. Arm bands were distributed by students groups also to raise awareness for the six African National Congress members condemned to death for treason and their participation in the sabotage campaigns against the apartheid state. Student groups involved in the 1983 National Armband Day included the Black Student Communication Organization Network located in New York City, students at Williams College, Rutgers University, Columbia University, and Dartmouth College. *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*, April 1983. (Aluka Database)(Accessed 6 June 2008).

²⁴ *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*, April 1983. (Aluka Database)(Accessed on 12 July 2010).

racism at home.²⁵ King's own commitment to end U.S. trade and investment in South Africa was evident in his early days of the civil rights movement. King co-sponsored, along with African National Congress member Chief Albert Luthuli, an "Appeal for Action Against Apartheid." The appeal was offered on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1962, and was part of an American Committee on Africa (ACOA) campaign to bring international pressure on the South Africa government in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre. King instructed supporters to "Urge your Government to support economic sanctions; Don't buy South African products; Don't trade or invest in South Africa."²⁶ By commemorating King's death U.S. anti-apartheid campus activists were able to connect King's own anti-apartheid legacy to a new generation of activists. King was memorialized by campus groups like the United Students Against Apartheid at UNC-Chapel Hill where they participated in memorial services that highlighted King's moral commitment to a "beloved community" but neglected the type of radical activism which informed his critique of persistent U.S. economic exploitation of the oppressed.²⁷ Rather

²⁵ On April 4, 1980 a sit-in and student strike were organized at Princeton University. The student group called the People Front for Liberation of Southern Africa had coordinated alternative classes and rallies in support of university divestment and to commemorate Martin Luther King. This was also the only year according to the widely circulated *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter* sponsored by ACOA that a forum honoring Malcolm X was mentioned. *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*. April 1980. (Aluka Database)(Accessed 6 June 2008).

²⁶ Lewis V. Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community. Martin Luther King, Jr. and South Africa*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 1995), 36-37; "Appeal for Action Against Apartheid," (Aluka Database). (Accessed June 10, 2008).

²⁷ On April 4, 1979 a candle light march was scheduled on April 4, 1979 at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. Calendar of Events. "National Week of Actions. Champaign-Urbana Coalition Against Apartheid." (Aluka Database)(Accessed 12 July 2010); On April 4, 1982 students from a coalition of groups which included the Upper Valley Committee for a Free Southern Africa, Afro-American Society, Anti-Nuke groups, and a the Radical Student Union attended a morning service of a "Rededication to Struggle in the Spirit of Martin Luther King." Defining the "spirit of Martin Luther King" was not provided in the literature. *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*. April 1982. (Aluka Database)(Accessed 6 June 2008).

King was fashioned as a sanitized black hero memorialized for his sacrifice in the struggle.²⁸

In April 1979, the United Nation's Special Committee Against Apartheid held a meeting to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. In his speech committee chairman Leslie O. Harriman of Nigeria stated that King's many philosophies "teach us that there can be no freedom without struggle and direct action by the oppressed people. Laws and resolutions alone can bring no meaningful change." A sense of urgency was present in Chairman Harriman's words. Harriman continued by stating the national liberation movement in South Africa "had felt obligated to abandon the non-violence approach and learned that its own struggle against racism would be no easy task." Harriman acknowledged King's commitment to the oppressed but followed up by stating that "it was only the struggle of the oppressed people, combined with effective international support that could bring liberation to South Africa."²⁹ Harriman avoided (albeit subtly) King's philosophy of non-violence and instead suggested that the necessity for the national movement's embrace of alternative methods for liberation. King was honored in this instance as a mentor, but his stance on non-violence appeared less relevant to current conditions in South Africa.³⁰

Calendar of Events. National Week of Actions. Champaign-Urbana Coalition Against Apartheid. April 1979. (Aluka Database)(Accessed 12 July 2010).

²⁸ Vincent Harding, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero, Revised Ed.*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2008)

²⁹ "Martin Luther King Commemorated at U.N. Special Committee. *Xinhua General News Service*. 6 April 1978.

³⁰ See Fredrickson

By October 1983, the National Student Anti-Apartheid Conference co-sponsored by ACOA and the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid called for a two-week campaign to support the liberation movements in Southern Africa. The “Two Weeks of National Anti-Apartheid Action” campaign was to begin on the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre and culminate on April 4th, the anniversary of King’s assassination. Mobilization packets from the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) were sent to affiliate organizations and campus groups meant to “maximize the political impact of decentralized activity through focusing on common themes during a limited (though flexible) time frame.” This strategy was similar to the week of Actions held in 1978 and 1982.³¹ The common themes of the “Two Weeks of National Anti-Apartheid Action” included the support of the southern liberation movements; opposition to U.S. economic ties and investments in South Africa; and the support of the cultural and sports boycotts. One of the agreed upon political focuses of the campaign included, “Linking the struggles against apartheid and U.S. racism with emphasis on April 4 commemorations of Martin Luther King.³²” The organizing plan for the anniversary of King’s death stated that Wednesday April 4th was “National Armband Day and Martin Luther King Anniversary.” The events for that day were specified in short detail as follows:

³¹ *Mobilization Packet for Two Weeks of National Anti-Apartheid Action*. American Committee on Africa. January 1984, 1. (Aluka Database) (Access 12 July 2010).

³² Ibid.

National Armband and Protest Day for Divestment from South Africa linked firms against Racism in the USA. Aim to culminate Weeks on strong note emphasizing link between struggle against apartheid and racism in the U.S. with Martin Luther King as the “connector.”

- 1) Throughout the day distribute black armbands symbolizing solidarity with those who have died in the struggles against apartheid and U.S. racism.
- 2) Activists should link anti-apartheid activities with commemoration of Martin Luther King and make plans now with other campus and community groups already planning to mark the day. An evening program making the link is good and we have included with this packet a speech by Martin Luther King for sanctions against S. Africa.
- 3) Organize Divestment Protest or Run for Freedom.³³

A prepared flyer was included in the organizing packet that had King’s image at the top and included excerpts from the “Appeal for Action Against Apartheid” speech. Also included was an excerpt from a speech King gave on December 10, 1965 at Hunter College where he described the terrifying conditions black South Africans endured under the white supremacist South African government. While these two excerpts briefly describe King’s position as supporter of divestment and U.S. sanctions against South Africa what was not suggested for the activists was how to “link” the struggles against apartheid and U.S. racism.³⁴ Over the next three years campus activists took it upon themselves to make that link relevant to the movement and to King’s legacy. By the mid-1980s numerous campus divestment campaigns had embraced King’s legacy of mass civil disobedience and non-violent direct action. Student anti-apartheid activists at Columbia University barricaded the doors to an administration building draping a banner

³³ Ibid, 2.

³⁴ Ibid, 3A

above that featured a quotation excerpted from the appeal that read, “In South Africa, the dignity of human personality is defiled.”³⁵ The organizing of teach-ins, holding alternative classes, shanty construction, and the occupation of administrative buildings by student demonstrators overwhelmed the mainstream media as a new breed of activism or a return of the sixties.³⁶

Community demonstrations did not elevate King any further beyond his “fallen hero” status. The decentralized nature of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement meant organizations were left alone to interpret King’s legacy and its relevance to their activism. In April 1979, community organizers for the Campaign to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA) used the anniversaries of the assassination and the Sharpeville Massacre to stage a series of protests around the country, which included a demonstration in front of the Citibank headquarters in New York City. A two-mile jog between two branches of Northwestern National Bank in Minneapolis was coordinated by the COBLSA where individuals were “encouraged to withdraw their account from that bank.”³⁷ Apart from the actions taking place on the anniversary date of King’s death there was little in the way of commemorating the man or his legacy. Among the more highly attended demonstrations held on the anniversary of King’s assassination one took place in Washington, D.C. where Mayor Marion Berry declared April 4, 1985 “D.C. Government Employees Day Against Apartheid.” Government workers joined protestors in front of

³⁵ Joseph Berger. “Dr. King Honored By Wide Protests.” *The New York Times*. 5 April 1985. Sec. A, 4 Col.1

³⁶ “Apartheid Protest Takes a Page from 60s History. *The New York Times*. 30 November 198. p. A13 “A Movement Reborn?” *The Washington Post*. 10 December 1984. p. 40.

³⁷ “Groups Protest Bank Loans to South Africa.” *Campaign to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa*. April 4, 1979. Aluka Database (Accessed July 12, 2010)

the South African Embassy where they sang freedom songs and chanted “Freedom Yes, Apartheid No.” Over 4,000 protestors came out in support of the liberation struggles in South Africa and the divestment of millions of U.S. dollars from the white minority ruled country.³⁸ References to the same Hunter College speech were given as evidence of the commonality of their activism to King’s activism from 1965. The recycling of movement literature was necessary to assist with mass mobilization effort, however, the reliance upon the same rote materials created a static image of King, as flat as his image on the distributed flyers. Additional support for the anti-apartheid movement benefited from another organizing opportunity associated with King and his legacy came with the national recognition of the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday.

On April 8, 1968, four days after King’s assassination, Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) introduced legislation to enact a federal holiday honoring the slain civil rights leader. An outpouring of public support followed in the wake of the anxiety and frustration over King’s death. Despite the growing urban unrest due to a lack of city-services, depleted schools, and skyrocketing unemployment King’s message of hope in the face of opposition prevailed. The creation of the King Center, in the same year, was designed by Coretta Scott King and supporters as the official “living memorial dedicated to the advancement of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leader of America’s greatest nonviolent movement for justice, equality and peace.”³⁹ U.S. anti-apartheid

³⁸ Karlyn Barker, “Apartheid Protests to Mark King Anniversary,” *The Washington Post*. April 3, 1985; “Dr. King Honored By Wide Protests,” *The New York Times*, April 5, 1985; Lisa Jennings, “Mass Apartheid Protests Honor Slain Civil Rights Leader,” *United Press International*. April 4, 1985.

³⁹ Coretta Scott King. <http://www.thekingcenter.org/KingCenter/Welcome.aspx> (accessed December 20, 2009)

campaigns coincided with the objectives of millions who supported national recognition of a Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday. But King's legacy for justice, equality and peace was often interpreted by campus and community activists who embraced King the "charismatic leader" or moral guide. This interpretation meant omitting King's more controversial stances on issues such as the restructuring of the capitalist system that facilitated in the exploitation of minorities and the poor.

The celebration of King's birthday offered anti-apartheid activists' valuable opportunities for mass mobilization. The recognition of the third Monday of every January as a day to celebrate King's legacy meant activists were given another fixed date on the calendar to plan out their actions ahead of time. King's birthday offered activists the opportunity to share with the public King's remarkable life of service and activism. And last, King's birthday was used by activists to reaffirm a collective memory concerning King's heroic legacy. The creation of a holiday in honor of a slain civil right leader assured new "rituals of protest" emerged to bond groups in solidarity as new activists became "heirs to a victorious or martyred generation of activists."⁴⁰

Concerns over how the holiday to honor a slain civil right leader was to be interpreted by activists emerged very early in the campaign for a national holiday. Was a King Holiday destined to become commercialized like other civic holidays (e.g. July 4th and Presidents Day)? Too often civic and movement holidays like Independence Day were subject to "political domestication"; expunged of the protest tradition which the

⁴⁰ Francesca Polletta. "Can You Celebrate Dissent? Holidays and Social Protest." *We Are What We Celebrate. Understanding Holidays and Rituals*. eds. Maitai Etzioni and Jared Bloom. New York: New York University Press. 2004, 165-172

holiday was meant to commemorate.⁴¹ Holidays set aside to commemorate the historical protest tradition of the United States were now collapsed into retail sales events and extra days off from work. Organizers were determined that the King Holiday was not to be stripped of its intended mission as a day of protest and activism. Activist Coretta Scott King, the widow of the slain civil rights leader, rejected the opposition's claims that King had ties to communism and that it was too expensive for the government and companies to support another holiday for employees. The first federal holiday to honor an African American was signed into law on November 3, 1983, by a skeptical President Ronald Reagan who had initially opposed the bill. The first national recognition of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday was on January 20, 1986.⁴² This symbolic victory came at the height of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement's mobilization efforts to increase pressure on policy-makers and corporations.

U.S. anti-apartheid activists had not waited for the nation to catch up to honor King's legacy. Honoring King through anti-apartheid activism in the 1980s was a way for a generation denied the activist spirit of the civil rights movement to feel a personal connection (bond) with King and others from the civil rights past. The "50 on Fifth Avenue" campaign brought out fifty demonstrators to the Fifth Avenue office of South African Airways on January 16, 1984. Demonstrators were there in "the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to protest apartheid in South Africa."⁴³ At the University of

⁴¹ Ibid, 168.

⁴² Matthew Dennis, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday: Inventing an American Tradition," *Red, White, and Blue Letter Days: An American Calendar*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 256-280.

⁴³ "50 on Fifth Ave. Protest Apartheid," *The New York Times*. January 17, 1984.

Tennessee Knoxville students organized an entire week of activities “commemorating Martin Luther King,” which included a radio show and screening films for students on and off campus.⁴⁴ By 1984 campus protests across the nation had increased and ACOA offered additional mobilizing materials in the student anti-apartheid newsletter which included an excerpt from the “Appeal for Action Against Apartheid and a complete copy of the Call for An International Boycott of Apartheid South Africa,” which was given by King at Hunter College in 1965.⁴⁵

Critics took notice of the use of King’s legacy and the tendencies of many activists and the media who linked the two liberation movements. ACOA president George Houser made the points of distinction very clear in a 1977 article entitled, “An Assessment of the Carter Administration Policy on South Africa.” Houser provided an anecdote about the Birmingham protests where Andrew Young and King attended a lunch with two corporate presidents, which resulted in a follow-up meeting where policies were changed and a committee of one hundred businessmen formed to negotiate the end of “apartheid in Birmingham.” However, Houser was clear that the struggles were different. Houser contended in his essay that the U.S. civil rights struggle was not essentially revolutionary:

⁴⁴ *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*. January 1982. (Aluka Database)(Accessed on 12 July 2010).

⁴⁵ *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*, January 1984. (Aluka Database)(Accessed on 12 July 2010).

It was aimed against discrimination and segregation. The ownership of property, control of industry, was not basically at stake. The civil rights struggle in the US was much more akin to past eras in southern Africa such as the pre-Sharpeville era in South Africa when the ANC was allowed to exist and could carry out non-violent strategies. The struggle in South Africa is now revolutionary. Whites rightly perceive that their privileged way of life is at stake. They see they will not be able to control what happens when pass laws are outlawed, when trade union rights are enforced, when there is universal franchise. The same old system will not prevail. The aim and intention of the liberation movements is the overthrow of the old system.⁴⁶

Individual activists, however, were not as likely to make the distinctions between the two struggles. The triumphalist theme of the civil rights movement, as reflected by campus based anti-apartheid groups in particular, revealed a naiveté concerning the dismantling of apartheid. Even Mrs. Coretta Scott King, an activist in her own right, claimed after a recent visit with Winnie Mandela, activist and wife of famed political prisoner Nelson Mandela, that while South Africans were “Committing crimes, as we committed crimes, breaking the law that was unjust in the civil rights movement caused many of us to go to jail. So I think it’s a similar situation with Mr. Mandela.” But while Mrs. King condemned violence as a way to achieve justice, she added, “There cannot be peace without justice. Our situation is that we operated in a framework of democracy in which we were represented in that framework. Here (South Africa) we don’t have that.”⁴⁷ Mrs. King acknowledged, as Houser had, that structural difference made combating apartheid extraordinarily difficult. However the U.S. anti-apartheid movement was unable to

⁴⁶ George M. Houser, An Assessment of the Carter Administration Policy on Southern Africa. *ACOA Action New*, July / August 1977, Aluka Database. (Access on 12 July 2010).

⁴⁷ Laurinda Keys, “Mrs. King Meets with Mrs. Mandela, Calls Trip a Success,” *The Associated Press*, September 11, 1986.

translate the difference to the American public that was viewing, with assistance, South Africa as an extension of the civil rights movement.

Invoking the spirit of King inspired movement mobilization, but how individual anti-apartheid groups and activists chose to promote King to the public was where his legacy was sanitized. In January 1985, Senator Edward M. Kennedy spoke of a recent trip to South Africa to a crowd of two thousand people at a King memorial breakfast. He relayed to those present at the breakfast, “that blacks trying to end racial segregation in that country were living the “dream of Martin Luther King.””⁴⁸ The continued use of the term “dream” reflected the most influential aspect of King’s legacy. The “I Have A Dream Speech,” that King delivered at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, is perhaps among the world’s most memorable speeches. The popular act of shortening the events official title *The March on Washington*, may have contributed to a popular misconception of King’s and the demonstrators’ demands for full economic equality not just accommodations in public spaces. Also, what King referenced in his “I Have a Dream” speech was the dismantling of the economic and political philosophies that prevented equal opportunities to all Americans. But what had been popularly recalled of King’s speech was the integrationist aspiration of the movement rather than a criticism of the economic system that inspired inequality.⁴⁹ King had been frozen in time trapped

⁴⁸ Michael Marriot, “King’s Dream Evoked on His Birthday,” *The Washington Post*. January 16, 1985; “U.S. Reflects on Dream of A Battlers for Rights,” *The New York Times*. January 16, 1985.

⁴⁹ Gary Daynes, *Making Villains, Making Heroes: Joseph R. McCarthy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Politics of American Memory*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1997); See Chapter 6 in Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Struggle for Economic Justice*, (Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Drew D. Hansen, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, (New York: Harper Collins. 2003).

in the national collective memory from the 1963 “I Have A Dream” speech. Few had regarded him in popular recollections of demanding a Poor People’s Campaign and or openly criticizing American imperialism in places like Vietnam and the country’s support of the apartheid era government.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson, former aid to King, openly criticized the sanitized versions of King that had emerged in the media. During an interview with Don Kladstrup of *ABC World News Tonight* Jackson angrily stated that “Every day, the philosophy of Martin Luther King seems to die a little.”⁵⁰ Jackson was angry over the popular representation of King as a “dreamer.” Jackson took notice of the “media distortions” that prevailed in the wake of national recognition of the King federal holiday. In a *Washington Post* interview, Jackson criticized the popular representations of King as “nonthreatening [sic] dreamer.” King was not, according to Jackson, a Pied Piper” or “some kind of free spirited man walking along with a dove in one ear and an American flag in another.” The sanitized version of King who stood “about five feet removed from reality” was too often the image evoked by anti-apartheid and organizations, a movement that Jackson himself was intensely involved. Jackson lamented over the memory of his mentor and states “That so-called ‘I have a dream speech’was not a speech about dreamers and dreaming. It was a speech describing nightmare conditions.”⁵¹

⁵⁰*ABC World News Tonight*, January 20, 1986 (Transcript)

⁵¹ Kathy Sawyer. “King Memory Distorted, Jackson Says in Atlanta; Reagan Is Criticized as a Hypocrite.” *The Washington Post*. 16 January 1986; First Section, A10.

After the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, commemorations regarding King did not cease but interpretations of King had changed significantly. King's image was used less frequently and only in relation to Nelson Mandela as the Free Nelson Mandela campaign became the next single issue to mobilize support after U.S. sanctions. Other changes in the way that activists' *used* King's legacy for mobilization purposes came late in the decade. While previous uses of King's legacy focused primarily on those he gave on behalf of South Africa, organizations such as the Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism (CD-CAAR) in Albany, NY approached King quite differently from earlier organizations. In 1988, the CD-CAAR's January newsletter included on its last page a section entitled, "Remembering the Revolutionary Values of Martin Luther King." Here the CD-CAAR had chosen an excerpt from his speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" that was given at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, one year before his assassination. The excerpt reads:

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must begin the shift from a 'thing oriented' society to a person oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

Activists earlier in the decade had been less likely to use this image of a "radical" or "revolutionary" King." But violence had escalated in South Africa which included ethnic fighting as well. Concerns of a revolutionary bloodbath were palpable. The newsletter

included an update on an International Apartheid Conference where concerns over tensions between the Inkatha Movement lead by Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and the African National Congress were discussed. The article explained to CD-CAAR supporters that the Inkatha Movement was not perceived as a legitimate representative for black South Africans because of the movement's ties to the South African government. Fighting between Inkatha and ANC supporters was on the rise by decade's end. Urban racial unrest in the United States was escalating as well as city and social services were on a steep decline for much of the decade. The CD-CAAR's commitment to social justice in South Africa as well as in Albany reflected its use of a "radical King" to remind coalition supporters of the "real King."⁵² But CD-CAAR member Vera Michelson wrote in a January 1991 newsletter an article entitled, "Martin Luther King: Revolutionary or Dream Merchant?" This article was in response to an erasure that CD-CAAR activists felt had occurred over the "true meaning of Dr. Martin Luther King." The sanitized view that had so often been the portrayal of King by "mass media, politicians, and professional 'dream organizers and merchants'" according to Michelson, "numbs us and enables us to create a perspective on King's life which is more comfortable, more easy to digest which fails to disturb or significantly challenge us." The notion of disturbing people into mobilization was why King and other civil rights leaders utilized the media so effectively. The images that came out of Birmingham, Selma, not to mention Soweto and Crossroads, disturbed an unaware public into action. A sanitized King was dangerous and

⁵² *Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism*, January 1988, African Activist Archive Database: Accessed on April 15, 2011.

had the potential to delude activists into thinking their actions, while well meaning, affected change. The “real King,” according to Michelson “called for a radical redistribution of wealth and power in America as a way of providing food, shelter, medical care, jobs, education and hope for all its people; denounced the U.S. government as the ‘greatest purveyor of violence in the world.’” But what Michelson and other community activists wanted the public to acknowledge was what changes had the “sanitized King” affected at home. Anti-apartheid activists that had offered up a sanitized version of King aided in the construction of a “Great Black Man” narrative surrounding King as well as the civil rights movement.

The “great black man” narrative existed even before King was assassinated. The mainstream media’s coverage of King caused resentment among local activists as well as movement leaders. However King became synonymous with the public as the leader of the civil rights movement; a distinction tirelessly cultivated and worn out by King in front of the cameras that followed him into civil rights hot-spots. But this “burden of representation” that followed King even after his death meant a national collective memory of King as national leader and messianic figure”; accepted by whites despite resentment and skepticism from the black community.⁵³ While commemoration activities that surrounded King were important for movement mobilization the public embraced two other “Great Black Men” of the anti-apartheid movement. These men appealed to the two-sided legacy of King that had not been fully realized by anti-apartheid activists:

⁵³ Michael Eric Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 283-287.

Nelson Mandela the “warrior activist” and Archbishop Desmond Tutu as the “moral guide.” Each presented the U.S. anti-apartheid movement an opportunity to compare their vision of anti-apartheid with that of King.

Archbishop Tutu presented the most obvious comparison to King for movement activists. Both were men of God and both adhered to the ethical and spiritual principles of non-violence. Both men were charismatic speakers who worked tirelessly toward a non-racial beloved community. However threat of banning or imprisonment for treason was a constant deterrent for Tutu. Any semblance of supporting or promoting the anti-apartheid movement’s campaigns for divestment or sanction caused the apartheid government to come down very hard on Tutu, regardless of his of Nobel Peace Prize. Despite being an outspoken critic of the Reagan administration’s commitment to “constructive engagement,” Tutu risked losing his visa or passport privileges from South Africa, which would have essentially silenced him to the international community. Cautious is not an accurate word to describe Tutu’s activism, but Tutu was extremely pragmatic when it came to his country’s oppressive tactics in silencing critics.

The imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela on the other hand presented a complicated comparison to King. Mandela was a lawyer not a minister. Mandela’s non-racial activism had to take into account the ethnic tension among tribal communities in South Africa. Mandela did offer himself up as a symbol to the movement, much like King. But threats of banning, imprisonment, exile, or death meant the image of Mandela was mythologized before he went to prison for twenty-seven years. Images and speeches of Mandela were banned from South Africa, meaning millions within South Africa

honored a leader of the movement but had no idea what he looked or sounded like. Instead, U.S. anti-apartheid activists had King's speeches and images to encourage U.S. anti-apartheid activists until Mandela's speeches were circulated despite banning in the South Africa.

The chief conflict between King and Mandela for U.S. activists was the issue of non-violence. Among the people King admired the most was Chief Albert Luthuli and his commitment to the non-violent struggle in South Africa under the apartheid regime. However after the massacre at Sharpeville in 1960 Nelson Mandela approached a reluctant Luthuli and explained that an armed struggle was imminent. Mandela explained to Chief Luthuli, a staunch proponent of non-violence, the rationale behind the armed struggle, when he stated, "violence would begin whether we initiated it or not." Mandela was concerned that frustrated black South Africans would retaliate against police and security forces encouraging further violence. Mandela argued, "would it not be better to guide this violence ourselves, according to principle where we save lives by attacking symbols of oppression, and not people?"⁵⁴ Mandela feared that "latecomers" to the movement would take the lead and risk more violent attacks. Chief Luthuli, Nobel Peace Prize winner for his stance on non-violence and inspiration to King, acknowledged Mandela's rationale and made the statement, "If anyone thinks I'm a pacifist, let him try to take my chickens, and he will know how wrong he is!" This exchange, found in Mandela's autobiography published years after the early commemoration activities that

⁵⁴ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company. 1994), 520-522.

connected King to South Africa, complicated the earlier “connector” image that ACOA had promoted. ACOA remained enthusiastic in their support of non-violence without publically condemning the armed struggle in South Africa.⁵⁵ Mandela attempted to explain to editors from *The Washington Times* who had visited him in 1985 why the ANC leader would not renounce violence as had King. Mandela explained that, “the conditions in which Martin Luther King struggled were totally different” from his own experiences. Mandela continued stating that “the United States was a democracy with constitutional guaranteed of equal rights that protected nonviolent protest...”⁵⁶ A similar claim made by Mrs. King that concerned the difference between the two movements and their strategies upon her visit to South Africa. The difference between the two countries’ struggles appeared inconsequential to U.S. anti-apartheid activists and by extension to the public these activists wanted to mobilize as pressure points on policy makers.

What emerged from the memorials and commemorations by U.S. anti-apartheid activists became a sanitized version of King’s legacy and an often naïve but well-intentioned campaign to end apartheid in South Africa. A narrow view of the radical King was offered to the public by anti-apartheid activists who largely neglected to include his more pervasive objectives, which included economic redistribution of wealth and power. Little space was afforded to contemporary activists who criticized his tactics

⁵⁵ George M. Houser, the director of ACOA for nearly three decades only mentions once the sabotage campaign and armed resistance in South Africa in his autobiography. He states that after the Sharpeville Massacre and the Treason Trail where Mandela was one of accused, Mandela helped organize the military wing of the ANC, Umkonto we Sizwe or “Spear of the Nation which was aimed at sabotage as a resistance tactic. George M. Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa’s Liberation Struggle*, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 257.

⁵⁶ Mandela, 520-522.

or learned from the mistakes made within the movement. Activists that attempted to connect the anti-apartheid struggle to U.S racism encountered resistance in the guise of black advancement, which permeated American media and popular culture by the mid-1980s. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "beloved community" morphed instead into a beloved narrative of King accepted and promoted by mainstream America.

CHAPTER IV
“THE DEVIL’S BOX”
BROADCASTING APARTHEID ON AMERICAN TELEVISION

As far as I am concerned, we will never have television.
- South African Minister of Posts and Telegraph Albert Hertzog, 1964.

In 1964 South Africa Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd categorized television as lethal as poisonous gas and as destructive as an atomic bomb. South Africa was the only western industrialized nation without television. Albert Hertzog, the Minister of Posts and Telegraph, provided the moniker “devil’s box” and argued that the wrong images could have detrimental effects on “children, the less developed and other races.”¹ National Party officials and the Dutch Reform Church in South Africa denounced television as a vehicle for communists and banned propaganda that would pollute their privileged status. Finally on May 5, 1975, Prime Minister John Vorster appeared on South Africa’s new and only channel proclaiming a new age of peace in Africa. The government-controlled South African Broadcasting Company (SABC) provided one and a half hours of programming each day and alternated between English and Afrikaans language programs meant to build greater peace in Africa.² Ultimately, Verwoerd’s initial critique of television was accurate. Television broadcasts about South Africa in the United States featured the “wrong images” of violence that Hertzog feared and

¹ “South Africa: The Other Vast Wasteland,” *Time Magazine*, Nov. 20, 1964.

² Ann Ray Martin with Peter Youngusband, “Pandora’s Box,” *Newsweek*, May 26, 1975.

engendered international outrage and demands for the systematic dismantling of apartheid.

What appeared on American televisions throughout the late 1970s, however, was a unique blend of media framing and rumination on America's own racial past. During the 1970s, U.S. broadcasts of the South African liberation struggle was met with the same network partisanship concerning issues of black self-determination, that castigated U.S. black radicals, like the Black Panthers for Defense, as being less legitimate to the black freedom struggle.³ American broadcasts of black South Africans running away from tear gas and riot police reflected a less than sympathetic view of their struggle, which correlated with the media framing of black urban America. The images that came out of South Africa during the 1970s reflected racial violence not seen on American televisions since the race riots of the 1960s. However, after 1975, the television coverage concerning South Africa changed from casual observations made by network nightly news broadcasts, to lengthier in-depth coverage of South African racial turmoil.⁴ By the mid-1980s, the media framing of South African protestors became more sympathetic as American audiences were prompted to recall images of the domestic black freedom struggle in the United States, one popularly perceived to have been overcome.

In this chapter, I examine a sampling of American network, cable, and public access broadcasts that appeared over a fifteen year period between 1975 and 1990, these

³ See Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, (New York: The New York Press, 2007).

⁴ Using Todd Giltlin's definition of "framing" as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters." Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left. with a New Preface*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 6.

broadcasts represented single-issue programs produced specifically with the intention to educate American viewers on South Africa. What resulted was an early barrage of violent imagery that came out of South Africa, despite their own media blackouts, and suggested a black revolution erupting in South Africa. By the mid-1980s, U.S. coverage became more sympathetic toward South African anti-apartheid activists. At the same time, U.S. anti-apartheid activists, like student divestment groups and the Free South Africa Movement, were included in the coverage. These U.S. anti-apartheid activists were often framed in a sympathetic manner, which suggested a popular acceptance and legitimization of their symbolic demonstrations.

Scholars have largely accepted the significant impact that broadcast journalism had on the American civil rights movement.⁵ Television cameras focused on specific movement actors such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers for Defense because they were charismatic and dynamic figures engaged in dramatic events. Select footage that included images of movement participants, demonstrations, and slain black civil rights figures were often re-broadcast during anniversaries of civil rights events, which became part of an American collective memory. Re-broadcasts of these images on the networks news shows, especially during the 1980s, was a significant tool

⁵ See Steven D. Classen, *Watching Jim Crow. The Struggles Over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Edward R. Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy*, (Wichita: University Press of Kansas, 2010); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Lights of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Godfrey Hodgson, *American In Our Time: From World War II to Nixon-What Really Happened and Why*, with a New Afterword by the Author, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat. The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of Nation*, (New York: Vintage, 2006); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

in the mobilization efforts of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. The U.S. anti-apartheid movement, reared on civil rights traditions, empowered by Black Consciousness, and emboldened by an unambiguous moral message of equality made for great television. And helped reinforce a romanticized view of the American civil right past.

Network Television

Network broadcasts of the South African struggle were limited in the early days to nightly national news broadcasts due to technological limitations. Film shot in remote locations on fragile film stock required facilities for processing. Film stock, once processed, was shipped to a studio for editing and then broadcast. International events quickly became out of date, as was a problem with much of the footage shot during the Vietnam War. This time consuming process did not change until the advent of videotape and the use of satellite technology in the 1970s. When footage was unavailable, network news often resorted to using photographic images similar to those already printed in national newspapers. First-hand accounts of daily life from South Africa were nearly non-existent because none of the “Big Three” networks, ABC, CBS and NBC had correspondents in South Africa prior to 1976. In fact, newspapers like *The New York Times* had to rely upon stringers or freelance reporters that contributed news content for media outlets. Then, in 1976, the South Africa government allowed foreign

correspondents back in Johannesburg which led to an increase in reporting and coverage out of South Africa.⁶

South Africa received nominal coverage on network broadcasts prior to the Soweto uprising in 1976. Between October 1968 and December 1975 there were 119 network segments on South Africa.⁷ The longest was a seven minute, twenty second segment on December 16, 1975, which concerned the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee's denial of funding for covert military aid to Angola and a discussion of South African intervention in the civil war in Angola was worsening.⁸ The logistics concerning the availability of film footage and reporters in South Africa meant broadcasters resorted to displaying a static image or a graphic, such as a map of South Africa, but this did not necessarily connect audiences with the complexities of the freedom struggle within South Africa. Coverage with no film footage meant a shorter segment no longer than thirty seconds which covered anything from the National Elections to international pressure on the South African government. The largest percentage of coverage from 1968 to 1975 centered on the white minority's control over the government of South Africa despite the liberation struggles raging in Angola and Rhodesia. Reporting of the various United Nations resolutions was the other popular

⁶ James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media, 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation*, (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 31-33.

⁷ Individual segments regarding South Africa on the network nightly news programs are available at the Vanderbilt Television News Archives. The archive's complete coverage of every network nightly news broadcasts begins in October 1968. Vanderbilt University.

⁸ *CBS Evening News*, aired December 16, 1975. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed March 11, 2009).

trend on the network nightly news broadcasts.⁹ One startling omission was the absence of any coverage of U.S. anti-apartheid led activism, which suggested that the movement was not large enough to garner national network coverage despite evidence to the contrary.

Network coverage of South African affairs increased after the Soweto Uprising. Six months after the Soweto Uprising in June 1976, there were 171 one network segments on South Africa, a dramatic increase from the 38 times in 1975.¹⁰ International media bureaus were reinstated in Johannesburg beginning in 1976 which corresponded with the reinstatement of foreign correspondents in South Africa. Despite the increase in coverage in 1976, the network coverage of the Soweto uprising was continually referred to as “riots” for much of the year. ABC reported that the day after the initial uprising, “more riots” continued and referred to the protestors as “militants.”¹¹ By the second day of the uprising, film coverage was available and featured angry black mobs stoning cars, looting stores, and attacking government buildings. Reporters like Clive Small for NBC described the protestors as “youths on rampage.”¹² A particularly scathing indictment of the protestors came from ABC’s Howard K. Smith. His commentary segment on June 22

⁹ Coverage regarding the southern African independence movements and apartheid begins in November 1975 but is tabled after the Soweto uprisings in June 1976; See the General Assembly Resolution: International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. (A/RES/3068) (XXVIII), 30 November 1973 and the General Assembly resolution: Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa – Situation in South Africa Resulting from the Policies of Apartheid. A/RES/3151 G (XXVIII), December 17, 1973; “The United National and Apartheid: 1948-1994,” *The United Nations Blue Book Series*, Vol. 1. (New York: Department of Public Information, 1994), 325-328.

¹⁰ Search of network broadcasts regarding “South Africa” yielded 290 segments in 1977 (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed March 11, 2009).

¹¹ *ABC World News Tonight*, aired June 17, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed March 11, 2009).

¹² *NBC Nightly News*, aired June 18, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive)(Accessed March 11, 2009); *CBS Evening News*, aired June 18, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive)(Accessed March 11, 2009).

attempted to educate viewers on the historical racial tensions within South Africa. He stated that black rule was “apt to be vengeful and destructive” toward the whites. Regarding the retraction of black African land in South Africa, Smith argued that whites did not take the land from anybody since much of the land in question had been empty. Smith went further by sharing a common accusation regarding the Soweto uprising: the students in particular were under some kind of dangerous communist spell.¹³ The increase in network coverage that the Soweto Uprising offered for American audiences was incredible. The media framing of the protestors on network broadcasts was riddled with condescension and was dismissive of the “teenagers” engaged in riots. Despite the media framing of the Soweto Uprising the coverage inspired a whole new generation of U.S. activists wanting to make a difference.

Audience receptivity to the increase in foreign reporting from South Africa prompted networks to invest in “single issue” broadcasts on South Africa. Apart from nightly news broadcasts all three national networks actively pursued the production of ‘special reports’ for broadcast that focused special attention on broad issues like the hunger in America, events like the Three Mile Island disaster, or individuals and groups like the Teamsters. Special reports were either thirty minute or one-hour broadcasts that allowed for opposing viewpoints which was prohibited during nightly news broadcasts because of time constraints. Special reports thereby were more comprehensive in their coverage since journalists were given additional time to gather resources and interviews.

¹³ *ABC World News Tonight*, aired June 22, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive)(Accessed March 11, 2009).

And because these were “special” reports the networks were giving their viewers the impression of additional news of value since it appeared separate from the traditional nightly news broadcasts. While the intention behind these special broadcasts was to expose an audience to a broader story, audience exposure was difficult to measure.¹⁴ The very pervasiveness of media in the daily lives of millions of Americans requires that historians not dismiss the impact that television has on contemporary movement mobilization.

The network special ABC’s *Wide World of Sports* was an immensely popular series for ABC, airing on Saturday afternoons for nearly forty years and offered sports stories from around the world. ABC sent tennis star and activist Arthur Ashe on a two month trip to South Africa to examine the impact of apartheid on sport. Ashe’s investigation turned into a half hour segment entitled: “Sport in South Africa: The Black and White of It,” which aired on Saturday, July 3, 1977. Ashe’s segment opened with a place Ashe would have felt most at home, a tennis court. However, this court was part of Ellis Park, a South African stadium that prohibited athletes from mixing on or off the court and field. A voiceover by Ashe then proceeded to give a brief overview of apartheid. He also prompted viewers to recall the late 60s riots in Newark, Watts, and Detroit, stating that the riots which began in Soweto the year before were worse. The intention of the segment was to extol one of the great characteristics of sport, the ability to unite a nation. However, according to Ashe, the very structure of apartheid was meant

¹⁴ Journalism and sociology professor Todd Gitlin, aptly points out that media exposure is hard to assess Todd Gitlin, *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives*, (New York: Owl Book), 19.

to keep athletes and spectators divided. Any attempt made to integrate sport was illegal and even fans were unable to mingle in the stands. The segment included interviews of officials from the apartheid government such as Minister of Sport Piet Koornhof. Strides toward integrating sporting events, according to the Minister, were being made. But critics like South African Council of Sport member N.A. Pather, Hassen Howa of the South African Cricket Federation, and Norman Middleton of the South African Soccer Federation called the actions “window dressing” and refused to see beyond the tokenism.¹⁵ These gentlemen were all of Indian descent and forcefully argued against their government’s attempt to sway the international sporting community toward easing sanctions and demonstrations against South African athletes. Ironically, none of these sports officials could travel overseas to sports conferences because of their South Africa citizenship. Norman Middleton was refused a passport by his government because he refused to sign a waiver stating he would refrain from criticizing his government at international conferences.

This ABC *Wide World of Sports* segment presented both black and white athletes and presented the viewpoint that all South African athletes were harmed by apartheid. Banned from most international competitions, white South African athletes, according to Ashe, were forced to sit out of meets and matches because of their government’s apartheid policies. When athletes were able to gain access to international events they

¹⁵ Interview with NA Pather, Hassen Howa, and Norman Middleton. *ABC Wide World of Sports*: “Sport in South Africa: The Black and White of It,” aired July 23, 1977, (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection. University of Georgia.) (Accessed 6 July 6, 2010).

were routinely met with resistance and protest and often prevented from competing.¹⁶ Ashe and the segment producers followed two rising tennis stars, one white and one black. Ashe spotlighted the advantages the white tennis player had over his black counterpart, noting that if given the chance to play each other the white tennis player would assuredly defeat the black player. Superior training facilities, access to professional coaches, and the ability to afford training resulted in a disproportional advantage for white athletes over black athletes in South Africa. Ashe and the producers were not making a slight against the black player but asserting a truth that was detrimental to sport in South Africa. Ashe interviewed Danie Malan, an Afrikaner runner, who was denied a chance to participate in the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. Already banned from the Olympics since 1970 and most international competitions, white South African athletes, according to Ashe, were forced to sit out of meets and matches because of their government's apartheid policies. When asked about how he felt about being denied the chance to compete, Malan stated, "If I could have been there I maybe could have reached the finals and run some good races."¹⁷ Had Malan competed that year, according to Ashe, Malan would have won the gold medal by more than three seconds. The inclusion of government officials, oppositional parties, and athletes offered insights largely not available on nightly news segments. Once more viewers, most likely

¹⁶ Douglas Booth, "Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38, no. 3, Sports and Politics (2003):447-493; Rob Nixon, "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott," *Transition*, no. 58 (1992): 68-88.

¹⁷ *ABC Wide World of Sports*: "Sport in South Africa: The Black and White of It," aired July 23 1977. (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection) (Accessed July 6, 2010).

sports fans already receptive to the ABC series broadcasts, were given additional insights on the injustices that prevailed in South Africa.

The segment concluded with Ashe attempting to purchase tickets to a publicized mixed soccer game. Ashe arrived at Rand Stadium with five young black South African boys and tried to purchase tickets at a “white only” ticket window. He was turned away with instructions to purchase tickets at the “black only” ticket window. When questioned about the publicized “open ticket” purchase and “open seating,” the attendant stated that it was untrue. Ashe ended the segment standing outside of Rand Stadium with the five young boys and stated he hoped that by the time these children were old enough to play in the stadium, “they’ll be playing on teams with white and Asians against other mixed teams.” Ashe’s final words to the audience were, “Hell, the real hope here is that by the time these youngsters are old enough to play in this stadium they’ll also have the right to vote.” American sports fans, perhaps not anticipating a political lesson on the popular ABC sports series, may have been receptive to the broader points of view about politics and sport, coming from a Cold War perspective. However, the racist apartheid system of sport may have appeared anachronistic to American sports fans. After all, the 1970s was a watershed for black American superstars of sports like Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Muhammad Ali, Arthur Ashe, and Willie Mays, not to mention baseball legend Hank Aaron, who surpassed Babe Ruth’s home run record in 1974.¹⁸

¹⁸ *The Journey of the African-American Athlete*, Director Leslie D. Farrell. Producer William C. Rhoden, HBO Home Video Production, 1996.

In direct contrast to a damning exposé on apartheid sport by Arthur Ashe and ABC were the hour-long special reports prepared by NBC and CBS. NBC's broadcast of *Africa's Defiant White Tribe* appeared four days after Ashe's ABC's *Wide World of Sports* broadcast, but NBC gave a primetime weeknight time slot to air to this program.¹⁹ *Africa's Defiant White Tribe* was the first time a network dedicated a news special to the white-minority and the Afrikaner perspective. The episode opened with white university students in Pretoria dressed in black-face participating in a campus parade. Reporter Garrick Utley spent eight weeks in South Africa and went "behind the riots and demonstrations" to examine the society which was believed to be at a crisis point.²⁰ The report delved into the permanent white fear that all they had achieved was to be engulfed by a black majority. The laws such as the Terrorism Act and Internal Security Act were examined for their impact on suppressing black opposition to the apartheid government. The episode also focused on the increased expenditures for training and arming the South African military against guerilla forces being trained outside of South Africa. The following year CBS aired *CBS Reports: The Battle for South Africa* on September 1, 1978. This single issue broadcast examined the entrenched white minority that maintained control despite being surrounded by the historic movement of African countries gaining independence. Reporter Bill Moyers reminds the audience that CBS Reports had been to South Africa on two prior occasions, back in the 1950s with Edward

¹⁹ The news special aired on a Wednesday night. *NBC News Special Report*. "Africa's Defiant White Tribe," aired July 27, 1977. (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection) (Accessed July 6, 2010).

²⁰ *CBS Special Reports*, "The Battle for South Africa," aired September 1, 1978. (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection) (Accessed July 7, 2010).

R. Murrow and with Walter Cronkite in the 1960s. The title of the episode implied that Moyers and his producers were not there to examine apartheid but to see how the confrontation between black and white predicted years ago had finally begun. This broadcast was indeed not a story about the evils of apartheid but a review of the preparation for war. The episodes followed guerilla fighters being trained in camps just beyond the South African border in Angola and at a camp for Rhodesian refugees. The audience learned that former students from the Soweto Uprising had been receiving military training and were prepared to fight the apartheid government. *The Battle for South Africa* confirmed that the “guerilla fighters” received money from supporters in the United States, which was used to purchase guns from the Soviet Union, and received training from Cubans. Both of these special reports played directly to the opponents of the Carter administration’s foreign policy embracing communism. Critics of the Carter administration’s more lenient stance toward human rights and the independence movements had their fears echoed among the white minority government. South African officials like Jimmy Krueger, the Minister of Justice, and Roelof Botha, the Foreign Minister echoed Carter’s critics who feared a communist take-over if the black majority destroyed the stability of South Africa.²¹ These special news broadcasts would have found an audience concerned with ongoing domestic urban social unrest. The violent opposition against busing in white northern enclaves like South Boston would have identified with the South African government’s suggested military option against the young revolutionaries training in the hinterlands.

²¹ Ibid.

More in depth broadcasts came in the form of the CBS news show *60 Minutes*. *60 Minutes* became a breakout weekly prime-time news program in the early 1970s that blended popular stories with more serious investigative reports in an hour-long format. Segments were longer than nightly news segments but shied away from the very expensive to produce single issue hour long programming. Previous weekly news programs had appeared on all three networks with the likes of famed journalist Edward Murrow's *See It Now*, and NBC's *White Paper*. These and other single issue news broadcasts were largely editorial in nature and all had very short runs on their respective networks. However *60 Minutes* offered what TV critic John Horne argued was "high Murrow" and "low Murrow" meaning that both entertaining or popular subject and serious subjects could both be featured on an hour long weekly broadcast.²² The show's popularity slowly built so that by 1979 it became the nation's top ranked television program. *60 Minutes* retained the number one or two ranking among television programs from 1979 through 1984. The show's unique style and unwavering attack of any type of governmental or corporate spin provided a legitimacy that other networks tried to replicate but with limited success. When viewers watched Morely Safer of *60 Minutes* interview South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha on December 13, 1984 outrage ensued over what viewers perceived was an extremely favorable handling of the Prime Minister. *60 Minutes* receive numerous complaints from angry viewers including *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis outraged over Safer's interview. Lewis criticized

²² Don Hewitt, *Tell Me A Story: Fifty Years and 60 Minutes in Television*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 105

what he called the “gushy talk of disappearing apartheid.” But when he questioned Safer about the interview Safer responded that Botha was speaking about “petty apartheid” – segregation at lunch counters and the like” which according to Botha was well underway.²³ The word “petty” had not been mentioned in the interview, giving the audience the impression that apartheid had receded by 1984. Critics argued that *60 Minutes* essentially supported the policies of apartheid because show producers dared to allow Botha to speak to American audiences. One critic denounced *60 Minutes*, arguing that the show would have never interviewed Adolph Hitler during the Holocaust to which Don Hewitt, the creator and executive producer of *60 Minutes* countered, that Hitler may have been the most despicable human being to ever walk the earth, “but he was also a big newsmaker as ever walked the earth. ” Hewitt continued, “I don’t know a newsman on earth who would have passed up an opportunity to have interviewed him.”²⁴ The criticism against *60 Minutes* and the increased coverage of South Africa as a result of coverage of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) on nightly news broadcasts demonstrated a dramatic shift in the treatment of South Africa and anti-apartheid activism.

The most ambitious change in network coverage occurred when the ABC network made the decision to take their late night news show, *Nightline*, to South Africa. *Nightline* was created by ABC in response to the Iranian-hostage crisis of 1979 and became the only nightly vehicle for single issue reporting on network television. The

²³ Anthony Lewis, “Getting it Wrong.” *The New York Times*, January 14, 1985.

²⁴ Ibid. 148

show's first scheduled broadcast from the state run South African Broadcast Channel (SABC) studios coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre. Ted Koppel, the show's anchor opened the first broadcast with a report of seventeen protestors killed earlier that day while attending memorials. Audiences were treated that first night to a debate between Nobel Peace Prize Winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Pik Botha, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information. The only thing these two agreed on was that change had come to South Africa, but argued over the pace and substance of that change.²⁵ Other guests that week included activists Cyril Ramaphose of the National Union of Mine Workers and Sheena Duncan, president of the Black Sash.²⁶ Each was given space to debate South African officials and the government's ongoing commitment to apartheid. Banned activist Winnie Mandela, wife of imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela, violated her banning in order to be interviewed by Ted Koppel. The deaths that had resulted earlier in the week confirmed, according to Mandela, that what the activists in South Africa had been saying all along continued twenty-five years later. Koppel questioned Mandela on the question of black majority rule; the fear of white South Africans. Mandela explained that the ANC was "prepared to accommodate everyone" and attempted to allay the fears of white South

²⁵ Botha made clear that reforms in the electorate had been as a result of a new constitution. Tutu was quick to point out that the "new" constitution still excluded 73% of the population. *Nightline*, March 18, 1985. (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection) (Accessed 7 July 2010).

²⁶ Sheena Duncan was the daughter of Eulalie Stott, a founding member of the Black Sash. The organization was founded in 1955 in opposition to the pass laws for non-white South Africans. For additional information on the Black Sash see Cherry Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); Barbara Hutchmacher MacLean, *Strike a Woman, Strike a Rock: Fighting for Freedom in South Africa*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc. 2004).

Africans who feared retaliation from a black majority and stated that even the racists were not to be “wished away.”²⁷

The last evening of broadcasts addressed the internal conflicts between the diverse political factions within South Africa. Representative from the Inkatha Freedom Party, the ANC, the United Democratic Front, and the Conservative Party debated compromise with the apartheid government. But the week’s broadcast culminated with an interview with Prime Minister P.W. Botha. Botha had complained about *Nightline*’s inclusion of banned figures like Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC and Winnie Mandela. Botha fiercely defended South African standards of living (comparing them to the rest of Africa). His critique of the squalid conditions in places like Harlem and other areas of the United States were offered by Botha in comparison to South Africa’s government housing for the poor. Prior to *Nightline*’s week-long broadcast from South Africa network broadcast coverage had focused on foreign developments concerning international trade and communist interest in Southern Africa. The *Nightline* broadcasts and the attention that the Free South Africa Movement’s year-long protest received created a significant increase in the network coverage that reached its zenith in 1986.²⁸

In his seminal work covering prime time television, Todd Gitlin states that both CBS, and to some degree NBC, had audiences disproportionately older and more rural than ABC because CBS, being the older network, had more affiliates first but in smaller

²⁷ *Nightline*, aired March 21, 1985. (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection) (Accessed 6 July 2010).

²⁸ Nightly news segments in 1985 went from 459 to 562 by the end of 1986 (*Vanderbilt Television News Archive*) (Footage accessed 12 March 2009).

less urban markets than ABC.²⁹ ABC, according to Gitlin, counted on younger more urban audiences which meant the same audience was less likely to have connected or recalled the broadcasts of civil rights coverage a decade earlier. The network broadcasts suggested an increased opportunity to mobilize U.S. anti-apartheid activists around an anti-racist morally unambiguous movement message.

Cable Television

A resurgence of American anti-apartheid activism that resulted with the 1976 Soweto Uprisings coincided with the beginning of a new era in American television, the cable era. Network television had dominated since the early days of television. The early days of cable television had been seen by industry professionals as a minor blip or passing fad. Few believed that audiences would pay for cable programming when they received programming for free through the networks. New cable providers, many located in rural areas, had a significant advantage over the urban network dominated cities; it was cheaper to wire the countryside than the cities. Networks transmitted their programming through microwave antennas. Local programming as opposed to network programming was more often viewed on television as the transmission from a local station to a local residence was less inhibited by geographical terrain. Networks transmitted programming by microwave frequency, which travelled in a straight line. A receiving antenna had to be perched at the highest point of a community to receive the incoming microwaves, making it difficult for residents in low-lying areas or behind mountain ranges to receive network

²⁹ Todd Gitlin, *Inside Primetime*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 56-58.

broadcasts. Cable providers managed to circumvent this problem by cable relays from the antenna to the home subscribers for a fee.³⁰

Customers were given options to subscribe to one or more pay channels, which allowed for an array of programming options not then available through local or network programming. The limited programming options in the early days of pay channels was a result of the limited number of movies licensed to the pay channels by movie studios. Studios would sell the rights to screen their films to the pay channels like HBO and Showtime, but the costs associated with these fees were extremely expensive.³¹ The limited programming options for these pay channels may have raised customer tempers and frustrated customers by the lack of new programming but the likelihood that a customer had seen these films at least once was reasonably high. This also suggested that anything deemed a onetime event such as a sporting event or special event such as a concert was notable and more likely to receive notice if not interest. Additionally, programming that was promoted as “special” would have garnered the attention of the subscribers.

³⁰ Cable subscribers were more likely to purchase access to one of the pay channels that offered alternative programming that the networks could not provide. A new customer was required to pay a onetime installation fee, which was often waived during promotional periods, then a monthly subscription fee for the various pay-channels such as Home Box Office (HBO) which programmed sports, specials, and movies. Other pay channels included HBO’s closest competitor Showtime and the Movie Channel. George Mair, *Inside HBO: The Billion Dollar War between HBO, Hollywood, and the Home Video Revolution*. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1988), xvii-9.

³¹ An example of the limited programming options for subscribers follows: If a customer chose to subscribe to HBO, Showtime, and The Movie Channel over a six-month period in 1981 he or she would have had the chance to see six movies programmed 252 times. The movies were *Rocky II*, 44 times; *Superman*, 53 times; *The Muppet Movie*, 37 times; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 41 times; ...*And Justice for All*, 39 times; *The Rose*, 38 times.

On September 12, 1985, the pay cable channel Showtime scheduled a special screening of *The Biko Inquest* to coincide with the anniversary of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko's death. *The Biko Inquest* was a televised stage production based on the courtroom transcripts from the official inquest that took place in South Africa concerning the suspicious death of the slain anti-apartheid activist. Showtime had also created a seven minute promotional video (promo) to air weeks before the official broadcast for subscribers. The length of the promo provided Showtime with an opportunity to educate subscribers on who Steve Biko was and the issues surrounding his death. Additionally the length of the promo provided an added value for subscribers, something extra in the days before "behind the scenes" material was available. The promo provided a brief biography on Biko and explained Black Consciousness as a reaffirmation of being black. Included in the promotion video was Donald Woods, an editor of the South African newspaper *Daily Dispatch* that interviewed Steve Biko and later smuggled Biko's writing out of South Africa.³² The last three minutes of the promotional video describe the plot of the play and the inquest in question. It is difficult to conclude if the audience in question would have known or recalled Steve Biko or the events surrounding the inquest. So it was of particular interest that Showtime made the decision for the video to provide the ending. The promo also contributed to the expectation that something indeed was very special about the September 12 broadcast. Showtime also scheduled a rebroadcast of Athol Fugard's teleplay *Master Harold...and*

³² Woods was also the author of the book, *Cry Freedom* about his relationship with Biko that would later be made into a feature film starring Kevin Kline as Woods and Denzel Washington in an Oscar nominated role as Steve Biko.

the Boys to precede *The Biko Inquest*. Originally aired the previous April as part of a new Broadway on Showtime series, *Master Harold ...and the Boys* featured a young Matthew Broderick in the title role as a young man in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, during the early days of apartheid, struggling with the news that his alcoholic father is about to return home from an extended hospital stay. Master Harold's frustrations soon are taken out on the supporting characters, which included veteran South African actor Zakes Moake.

What viewers were given was nearly four hours of narrative programming that focused on injustice and violence that resulted from apartheid. Black South Africans were relegated in *Master Harold ...and the Boys* to recognizable American cinematic characterizations of the loyal slave, servant or *sambo*. Whereas *The Biko Inquest* was reminiscent to American audiences of the numerous court room dramas where audiences in the courtroom as well as those watching at home realize that not only is justice blind but is also racist when it comes to defending the rights and lives blacks. Too often these cinematic entrees into racial justice featured white paternalistic figures coming to the aid or rescue of the oppressed, also a characteristic of the narrative features regarding the civil rights movement (discussed further in Chapter 5).

The broadcasts also received a lengthy review in the September 12, 1985, Late City Final Edition of *The New York Times*. John J. O'Connor, *The New York Times* television reviewer, praised the production, stating that *The Biko Inquest* was "lean and taut as any good courtroom drama must be." While O'Connor praised both the play and Showtime's "inspired bit of scheduling" of *Master Harold...and the Boys* as well, there

was no mention that both were airing on the eighth anniversary of Steve Biko's death.

O'Connor opened his review with a brief accounting of Biko, as a "rising star within the anti-apartheid movement" and the forty-fifth known detention death since 1963.³³

O'Connor missed the opportunity to acknowledge Showtime's tribute to the slain leader.

He did, however, acknowledge in an article three days earlier that WTBS, the superstation out of Atlanta, was to air *Trumpets of Conscience*, a documentary tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. slated to air on January 20, 1986, to commemorate King's birthday. But O'Connor equated the airing of both apartheid-themed telecasts, *The Biko Inquest* and *Master Harold...and the Boys*, as being timely because of the violence that was still occurring in South Africa, offering these two broadcasts as an entry point into anti-apartheid debate.³⁴

Cable television provided an alternative vehicle for consciousness-raising but there were drawbacks to the format. Both *The Biko Inquest* and *Master Harold...and the Boys* were taped theatrical performances, part of the Broadway on Showtime series. While each received critical praise among industry insiders and at the United Nations there was the problem of the viewership. I contend that the promotion and frequency of these broadcasts reached an audience that might not otherwise have engaged in viewing either docudrama. Showtime's nearly 5.4 million subscribers tuned in on September 12 to participate in an armchair consciousness-raising experience. Even Allen Sabinson, the

³³ Biko was actually the 46th known detainee to die while detained by the South African Security Police.

³⁴ John J. O'Connor, "TV Review: The Biko Inquest On Showtime," *The New York Times*, Late City Final Edition, September 12, 1985.

Senior Vice President of Original Programming at Showtime acknowledged that according to research, the plays airing on Showtime, reached only one-fifth to one-quarter of their total viewing audience. Sabinson, was however, encouraged that decisions to air plays on Showtime, like *The Biko Inquest* and *Master Harold... and the Boys*, along with the fifty-three previous productions sponsored by Showtime, was important because their broadcasts presented “an opportunity to develop tremendous enthusiasm among a select part of the public.”³⁵ This enthusiasm for reaching that audience was supported by Neil Austrian, chairman and CEO of Showtime, who said at the UN screening of *The Biko Inquest* the month before that he hoped the broadcasts would “help in efforts to abolish the apartheid system in South Africa.” While lofty in his intentions, Austrian affirmed in his introduction of the film that at Showtime he hoped the broadcasts on September 12, 22, and 26 “provokes anger and helps in some way to put an end to the current South Africa crisis and the obscenity of apartheid.”³⁶

Public Access Television

Network coverage on South Africa began to wane in the years after the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. The success of the sanctions movement in the United States yielded sweeping policy changes and the first overturn of a presidential veto regarding any foreign policy matter of his administration. The singular goal of the sanctions movement meant the U.S. anti-apartheid movement ebbed after

³⁵ Claude Robinson, “South Africa: Television Movie on Steve Biko Previewed at UN,” *IPS-Inter Press Service*, August 22, 1985.

³⁶ Elaine Sciolino, “Biko Film Shown at UN,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 1985.

1986. Network coverage on South African issues in 1987 was reduced to half that of 1986, and much of the coverage centered on the internal sabotage campaign and often described the acts as “terrorism.” Public access television was able to step in with special programming to combat the decline of network coverage. The award winning *Frontline* series dedicated five-hour long episodes to the issue of apartheid during the week of December 14, 1987.

Perhaps the most ambitious avenue for spotlighting issues in South Africa for U.S. audiences was the development of *South Africa Now*. The short-lived program ran from 1988 to 1991 and was dedicated to keeping attention on South Africa in the wake of decreased network coverage, which by 1987 highlighted sabotage campaigns, far removed from the “race riot” coverage that occurred on network television during the late 1960s. Millions of Americans acknowledged the immorality of investing in the apartheid state but failed to comprehend the internal struggle that continued in the late 1980s. *South Africa Now* offered a weekly window into South Africa as press bans and states of emergency prevailed. The weekly half-hour television program was produced by South Africans with the help of American journalists and was the only program of its kind in the world. *South Africa Now* broadcast the pictures and voices that no longer appeared on regular television. The Reverend Allan Boesak, an activist of South Africa, said of the initial broadcasts, “I have seen just one or two of these programs and I said to myself ‘It is actually happening.’”³⁷ The broadcasts did not just focus on the politics in South Africa

³⁷ *South Africa Now*, Peabody Awards Submission Tape, 1988 (Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection. University of Georgia.) (Accessed 7 July 2010).

but also featured segments on the country's popular films, dance and art. One segment featured during each broadcast was an analysis of inaccurate reporting in American media regarding South Africa. The show, according to producer Danny Schechter, became "as much about TV news and what it doesn't cover as the struggle for freedom in South Africa."³⁸ However, any images of violence coming out of South Africa were fast replaced by network broadcasts of the Rodney King beating and the domestic urban unrest that resulted after the 1992 "not-guilty" verdict. The abrupt end of *South Africa Now* in 1991 suggested that American audiences perceived the liberation struggle was nearing an end since the return of Nelson Mandela.

By 1990, the year of Mandela's release from prison, there had been nearly three decades of broadcasting apartheid on American televisions. Early broadcasts revealed "teenage rioters" that spoke more of U.S. attitudes toward youths in revolt as a result of the protests of the 1960s. Broadcasts then followed the cavalcade of activists and invested in single-issue special reports as a means to explain the complexities of apartheid. The new media of cable television offered another vehicle to raise awareness but was limited to those audience members that paid their subscription fees. In the end, public access became the last front for South African coverage in the United States. The fact that *South Africa Now* was canceled after Nelson Mandela was freed reflected a popular acceptance of the "great black man" narrative. The years between Mandela's freedom and the first democratic elections were among the most violent in South Africa. Unfortunately,

³⁸ Danny Schechter, *The More You Watch the Less You Know. News Wars [sub] Merged Hopes Media Adventures*, Forwards by Jackson Browne and Robert W. McChesney, (New York: Seven Stories Press. 1999), 238-243.

comprehensive U.S. television coverage concerning South Africa subsided after the democratic elections in 1994, indicating to American audiences that the liberation struggle in South Africa was triumphant. This also suggested that the democratic elections in South Africa, just like the legislative civil rights victories of the 1960s, signaled the end to the black freedom struggle, which was far from the reality.

CHAPTER V

“NO SONGS WRITTEN FOR YOU, MA”.¹ THE FRAMING OF BLACK FEMALE ACTIVISM IN FILM AND TELEVISION

I keep coming back to truth, but I defend the right to change it in order to reach an audience who knows nothing about the realities and certainly don't watch PBS documentaries. The proof in the end will be how it reaches an audience.²

Alan Parker, Director

It may not be the intent of a filmmaker to teach audiences anything, but that does not mean lessons are not learned.³

bell hooks

If you want to send a message, use Western Union.⁴

Samuel Goldwyn, Producer

On October 5, 2006 a conference entitled, “In the Midst of a Movement: The South, The Press, and Civil Rights” was held at Elon University. The conference was organized to highlight the role of southern journalists during the civil rights movement. In attendance were three reporters who covered the Movement and current reporter Jerry Mitchell of the *Clarion Ledger* in Jackson, Mississippi. Mitchell was too young to report on the civil rights era. He was invited to the conference because of his recent

¹ *Sarafina*. Dir. Darrell Roodt. Buena Vista Pictures, 1992.

² Alan Parker is the director and producer of the film *Mississippi Burning*. In phone interview with journalist Wayne King, “Film: Fact vs. Fiction in Mississippi.” New York Times 4 December 1988. 0, 15.

³ bell hooks. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. New York: Routledge, 1996, 2.

⁴ A popular maxim of the powerful film producer Samuel Goldwyn, co-founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Studios.

investigations into open or poorly investigated civil rights era cases throughout the South. In his opening remarks, Mitchell revealed that the inspiration behind his investigations was the result of watching the film, *Mississippi Burning* in 1988.⁵ Mitchell confessed that while he was somewhat aware of the history surrounding the activists murder he was inspired to dig deeper into the police investigation and court proceedings only after he had seen *Mississippi Burning*.⁶ That the events depicted in *Mississippi Burning* were enough to inspire admissions of guilt and convictions in Mississippi was extraordinary; especially in light of the swirling criticism that followed the film's opening.⁷ While it may be impossible to accurately measure how a film's influence can inspire sweeping social or political change, it is possible to examine how anti-racist civil rights and anti-apartheid docudramas continually marginalized black female activism in popular film and television. This chapter will examine the representation of black female activism in films about apartheid era South Africa released between 1986 and 1993 and how the imagery in these films mutually reinforced a popular reading of civil rights films of the same period.

⁵ *Mississippi Burning* is the fictionalized account of the 1964 FBI investigation into the disappearance of three civil rights activists in Neshoba County, Mississippi.

⁶ Interviewed by author after Session Three, Elon University. October 5, 2006.

⁷ Scholars criticized the filmmaker's choice to center the film on white FBI agents and their investigation that downplayed the involvement of the black community in Neshoba County. Richard Cohen. "Hollywood's Civil Wrongs." *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1989, W9, Final Edition; Rita Kempley. "'Burning': Potent But Problematic." *The Washington Post*, STYLE; C1, December 9, 1988, Friday, Final Edition; Wayne King. "FILM: Fact vs. Fiction in Mississippi." *The New York Times* Section 2; Page 15, C1; Arts and Leisure Desk, December 4, 1988, Sunday, Late City Final Edition; Harvard Sitkoff, 'Mississippi Burning.' *Journal of American History*, Vol. 76, no. 3 (Dec. 1989); 1019-1020. Robert Brent Toplin. "Mississippi Burning: A Standard to Which We Couldn't Live Up." *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. 26-44; Juan Williams. "What About the Black Heroes." *The Washington Post*. STYLE; C1 December 9, 1988, Friday, Final Edition.

Mississippi Burning was part of a bloc of anti-racist docudramas released over an eight year period that centered on narratives concerning the Civil Rights Movement and apartheid era South Africa. The civil rights era narratives like *Heart of Dixie*, *Murder in Mississippi*, *The Long Walk Home*, and the short-lived television series *I'll Fly Away* focused on a black moral authority which elevated the non-violent direct action protest tradition of the movement. South African docudramas like *Cry Freedom*, *A World Apart* and *Cry, Bopha!* followed a similar narrative theme of romanticizing the liberation struggle in South Africa since audience accessibility was critical for a film's financing and international distribution. This meant both a narrowed cinematic reading of black radical politics and a popular rendering of *apartheid* as a transnational extension of the civil rights protest tradition. Films obscured or omitted the presence of an organized black female protest tradition and when not ignoring the collective power of black female activism, black female characters were relegated to supporting roles assisting in the private "consciousness-raising" of white leading characters. This further subordinated black voices in favor of white liberal voices that supported non-violent direct action over the radical ideologies of armed self-defense in the United States and the armed struggle in South Africa.

The dearth of black female lead characters in films concerning the civil rights and apartheid era reflected a similar paucity of scholarship concerning black female activism.⁸ On screen, as in the scholarship, the black freedom struggles were

⁸ More comprehensive studies on black female centered activism started to emerge in the 1990s. See *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*. ed. Joanne Meyerowitz.

characterized as male-dominated despite the influence and activism of women. A preponderance of earnest wives, stoic domestics, and “foolish girls” comprised the majority of the black female characters in both apartheid era films, and civil rights films of the same period. American audiences were used to viewing social equality films where support for black radical ideologies by black female characters was also conspicuously absent. Despite supporting roles to male anti-apartheid activists like Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and Joe Slovo none of the female characters in apartheid era films were shown embracing or participating activism, especially radical activism such as the sabotage campaigns led by *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation), the military arm of the African National Congress.⁹ Black female characters in the apartheid films were rarely seen outside a sphere of domesticity which reinforced what cultural scholar Herman Gray argues was the emergence of new black imagery in the 1980s that represented “...moral character, individual responsibility, and personal determination to succeed in spite of residual social impediments.”¹⁰ Any mention of support for the radical protest traditions was viewed as a challenge to the “legitimate” activist philosophies established by white liberals. Films about South Africa, according to Rob Nixon, required an *American liberal view*, one that disregarded black radical protest philosophies (as well

Harrisburg: Temple University Press. 1994; *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965*. eds. Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, Barbara Woods. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1993; Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore. *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1996.

⁹ The appearance of publicity photographs of Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko are often on the walls in a show of solidarity with these leaders and their ideals.

¹⁰ Herman Gray. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for 'Blackness.'* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1995, 19-25.

as any hint of a feminist ideology) thereby making the films more accessible for American audiences.¹¹ In the few instances when black female characters challenged cinematic conventions they were quickly admonished or killed. Ironically narratives with black female lead characters, a rarity among studio films, were praised by audiences at the box office, a response perhaps suggesting an appeal for such challenges to the cinematic tropes of the era.¹² Additionally, while these civil rights and apartheid era films have been the subject of innovative analysis by scholars, none has probed deeply enough into the construction of black female activism in popular film or television.¹³

In the decade before the release of numerous civil rights and apartheid era films there were Blaxploitation films. Set primarily in the 1970s, blaxploitation films dealt with contemporary issues that black audiences related to such as high black unemployment, urban crime, and police brutality. That blaxploitation films were overtly political in their criticism of King's "dreamed deferred" was not lost on black audiences disillusioned by the lack of social change and frustrated over failed economic advancement nearly three decades after civil rights legislative gains. A community once unified in their quest for full citizenship was now deeply divided as a growing black middle class moved out of

¹¹ Rob Nixon. *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood. South African Culture and the World Beyond*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 79-83.

¹² Ticket sales to the film *Sarafina* (1992) which featured South African actress Leleti Khumalo as the titled character was the first feature film about apartheid era South Africa that had a black female led. Analysis of ticket sales reflects one of the highest grossing "apartheid films" of this period. The film grossed over \$7,300,000. www.imdb.com (access 10, June, 2010). The film *A Long Walk to Freedom* co-starring Whoopi Goldberg and Sissy Spacek grossed over

¹³ Peter Davis. *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996; David L. Hostetter. *Movement Matters: American Anti-Apartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2005. G.S. Jowett. "Hollywood Discovers Apartheid." *Journal of Popular Film & Television*. Winter 92, Vol. 19, Issue 4 p. 172-179. Rob Nixon. *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood. South African Culture and the World Beyond*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

segregated urban center. As beneficiaries of the civil rights tradition, this new black bourgeoisie took advantage of the educational and occupational opportunities that resulted from the black freedom struggle. They left behind a black urban class that remained trapped in decaying city centers. The popularity of the blaxploitation films among this population was attributed to theme of revenge aimed at overcoming symbols of white oppression and corruption. Black leading actresses like Pam Grier, Tamara Dobson, Trina Parks, and Rosalind Cash emerged as role models for this post-Civil Rights generation of black urban youth coming of age in the 1970s. These new black heroines were fiercely independent, self-assured, and derived great pleasure in combating male chauvinism while still retaining their sexual allure. In an August 1975 interview with Pam Grier, journalist Jamaica Kinkaid wrote that these characters and their films offered audiences an “independent, resourceful, self-confident, strong and courageous woman.” Blaxploitation films were also, according to Kinkaid, the “only films to show us a [black] woman who triumphs!”¹⁴ Black female icons like *Foxy Brown*, *Cleopatra Jones*, and *Coffey* emerged and coincided with both the women’s movement and the Black Nationalist movement. Despite their revenge themes these female characters were more often portrayed fighting on the side of law and justice.¹⁵ And in the case of *Foxy Brown*, Pam Grier as the title character enlists the support of a radical Black Power group

¹⁴Stephane Dunn. *Bad Bitches & Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2008. 14.

¹⁵ “Beretta E. Smith-Shomade. “Rock-A-Bye Baby!” Black Women Disrupting Gangs and Construcing Hip-Hop Gangsta Films.” *Cinema Journal* 42. No. 2. Winter 2003. 27.

fashioned in the style of the Black Panthers to assist her in bringing a white female crime boss to justice.

Film Historian Donald Bogle argues that these female Blaxploitation characters were actually an extension of the “old-style mammies” that set out to clean up their own homes and neighborhoods of drug pushers, pimps, and gang members. Linking these women to “old-style Mammies” is a severe indictment. While they protected “hearth and home from corrupt infiltrators” they were empowered in a way that cinematic mammies were unable to attain. These “macho goddesses” that Bogle refers actually had freedom of movement, sexuality, and self. Using the logic that *Coffey*, *Foxy Brown*, and *Cleopatra Jones* acted as “nurturers or communal mothers” to their neighborhoods would mean essentially consigning all black female character set in a domestic environment to an extension of a mammy as well. It is doubtful is that Clare Huxtable, of the *Cosby Show*, or the black female leads in the film *Waiting to Exhale* could be classified as a “mammies.” But despite the overwhelming popularity of these films, the activist image of strong black female characters taking charge of their environment and surroundings was left in the 1970s. What then happened in the films of the 1980s that banished the contemporary “Superbadd, Supermama” to midnight screenings and allowed the return of subservient black female characters trapped in historical docudramas?¹⁶

The civil rights and apartheid era films that appeared in the 1980s and early 1990s were consistent with what Ed Guerrero describes as a “cinema of recuperation.”

¹⁶ “Donald Bogle: Toms Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Black in American Films. 4th edition. New York: Continuum, 2002, 251-252.

Blaxploitation films and had to be sacrificed to restore an “American optimistic, hegemonic ideology,” all of which had, “its historical origins in the country’s self-confident, expansionist past.”¹⁷ Films like *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *Heart of Dixie* (1989), *Murder in Mississippi* (1990), *The Long Walk Home* (1991), and the television series *I’ll Fly Away* (1991-1993) were reaffirmations of a triumphant American past. They did not represent of black economic, political, and social dislocation caused by institutional racism. These films were a reminder of a “mission accomplished” rather than the opportunities lost for ongoing dialogue about racism in America. The civil rights era films followed moral crusaders fighting and gaining citizenship thereby enabling the United States to fulfill its democratic promise. The apartheid films would share similar conventions and continue to reinforce the cinematic narrative of the civil right movement. That all of these films featured morally unambiguous black characters supporting the non-violent direct action protest tradition should be emphasized. The stoic black characters in the civil rights films supplanted the blaxploitation “superspades” and “bad bitches” in the fight for social justice. Apartheid films in particular positioned black female characters to roles that made them witnesses to apartheid rather than agents of its destruction; reaffirming a familiar convention regarding black women in the civil rights films. What resulted, with few exceptions, especially in the apartheid era films, is the rendering of black female characters to lesser supporting roles as, minion, wife/mother or fool, but never as leader or activist.

¹⁷ Ed Guerro, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993, 113-114.

Popular black female activists like Coretta Scott King and Winnie Mandela were more often associated in popular presses and media with their husbands' activism than of their own. It is no wonder that these two women would take a back seat in the television docudramas based upon their husbands' activism. Produced just ten years apart *King* (1977) and *Mandela* (1987) represented what communications scholars called "entertainment-education" media. Media producers, according to William J. Brown and J. Duane Meeks, offer an entertaining format, like a docudrama, with an educational message. The idea is then for the message to address an important societal need such as ending racial discrimination or simply reopening a civil rights era murder investigation.¹⁸ The docudramas depict King and Mandela combating the political, economic, and social dislocation of blacks caused by white supremacist machinations. The films themselves are a way to "edu-tain" an audience into recognizing the existence of institutional racism without appearing accusatory or antagonistic toward the audience, or the cultural industry that produces these images. What the audience failed to comprehend from the films' was that institutional racism persisted, even in Hollywood. Both films also featured the leaders' "movement wives," Coretta Scott King and Winnie Mandela. But their wives' activism was not afforded similar reverence; instead the films praised Mrs. King and Mrs. Mandela for being dutiful wives and stoic mothers rather than as activists in their own right.

¹⁸ William J. Brown and J. Duane Meeks. "Experimenting with Entertainment-Education Strategy in Film and Video." *Journal of Film and Video*. Vol. 49, no. 4 (Winter, 1997). 30-43.

Of the two films, *Mandela* does offer space for Winnie Mandela to become a more fully developed character. The docudrama, which premiered on HBO on September 20, 1987, received mixed reviews. But it should not be ignored that *Mandela* was among the first commercially produced films about apartheid. Critics were less impressed with the romantic sentimentalism between Nelson and Winnie and the couple's apparent lack of flaws. One reviewer said of the film's characters, "One may oppose a virulently racist and oppressive regime without being or becoming a glowing Pollyanna in the process."¹⁹ The portrayal of Nelson in prison gives the impression that his incarceration was a mere annoyance; a battle of wills between he and his jailers. Rather than allow his jailers to see him suffer the cold weather he refuses to wear a blanket when jailer check on him. Elsewhere the film shows him wistfully dusting his possessions while internally dictating love letters to his wife, Winnie. Audiences do not see the same attitude of indifference to detention when Winnie is arrested and sent into solitary confinement. She suffers in prison. Nearly four minutes of the film is dedicated to Winnie's incarceration and her slow psychological and physical deterioration. Winnie is seen passing out while being interrogated; whereas Nelson is never seen being interrogated by the police. Nelson is surrounded by ANC members while Winnie remained isolated searching for ants to help ease her loneliness. Where the film afforded images of contentment and stoicism to Nelson, the great leader, it denied Winnie the same strength.

¹⁹ Tom Sales. "Mandela: Opportunities Missed: An HBO Disappointment, with Danny Glover & Alfre Woodard." *The Washington Post*. 19 September 1987. STYLE D1 TV Previews.

Nelson Mandela's direct activism was carefully recreated in the film but Winnie's activism is never given the same attention. Audiences are introduced to young Nelson as he goes door to door raising awareness and funds for the African National Congress (ANC). Winnie is first on screen walking casually down the street when she is then introduced to Oliver Tambo, an executive member of the ANC. The new acquaintances go to lunch and it is at lunch where Winnie meets Mandela.²⁰ While Winnie readies herself for a first date with Nelson the camera sweeps over newspaper clippings hanging on her bedroom wall with headlines that read "First Black Social Worker" which establishes Nomzamo Winifred "Winnie" Madikizela as an activist before she met Nelson Mandela. The film's reverence for Nelson's activism continues as Nelson is seen giving speeches to reluctant township residents regarding the Defiance Campaign, or defending himself at the Treason and Rivonia trials. The film depicts Winnie's "social work" as her sitting among a group of women being instructed in infant care.²¹ Nelson is filmed among colleagues, inside or outside of prison, discussing issues concerning the armed struggle against white supremacy, but Winnie is not afforded the same camaraderie within the movement.

²⁰ The film took liberties with their courtship. Mandela recalled first seeing Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela waiting at a bus station. But they officially met at the law office he shared with Oliver Tambo. She and her brother were there to discuss a legal matter with Tambo. Nelson Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. New York: Back Bay Books, 214-215.

²¹ A sampling of Winnie Mandela's social work in action while banned included opening her home to schoolchildren in Brandfort so they could have a soup, the only warm meal for most of them each day. This inspired her to coordinate a soup kitchen at the local school. Despite her banning she encouraged a garden project for residents to cheaply grow their own vegetables. And assisted in coordinating a sewing coop for school uniforms so that parents could purchase school uniforms on installments. Winnie Mandela. *Part of My Soul Went With Him*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1985.

After marriage, Winnie is never seen outside of the home or a prison. Winnie, as represented on screen, is denied the opportunity to participate in overt activism within South Africa. Audiences only know of her movement activism through faint radio announcements which allude to her writing and publishing subversive materials which later earned her a banning order. All direct involvement in the liberation struggle is reserved to off screen. Apart from the seventeen months of her solitary confinement the film neglects her other detentions or the activism that resulted in those detentions. The film neither addresses the legal nor the bureaucratic struggles that Winnie engaged in to acquire permission to visit Nelson in prison. The film gives the impression that apart from the seventeen months in detention, Winnie was able to visit Nelson every six months. Winnie was also never seen engaged in her social work, or participating in meetings or helping to organize student groups despite her banning.²² A scene that is particularly problematic occurs after the Treason Trial when Nelson Mandela is found not guilty. Winnie becomes resigned to the fact that any hope for familial normalcy with Nelson has ended when she says of him “I didn’t marry a man, I married a struggle.” While dramatically effective this scene reduced Winnie to a frivolous wife annoyed with her husband’s silly ambitions. Police are also seen routinely raiding her home and penetrating into her domestic space, which results in her cantankerous reprimands against

²²For details about Winnie Mandela’s activism see Nelson Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. New York. Back Books, 1991. Tom Lodge. *Mandela: A Critical Life*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2006.

the police. She is less an activist in these scenes and more a belligerent housewife annoyed with the molestation of her belongings.

While audiences are denied any semblance of female direct action, Winnie is allowed to participate in subtle acts of defiance. Winnie's clothing choices become less westernized and she opts for more traditional dress in the film. The real Winnie Mandela was once instructed by the minister of justice to refrain from wearing traditional dress or be prohibited from attending court where Nelson was on trial for inciting a guerilla warfare which became known as the Rivonia Trial.²³ The character Winnie is transformed on screen from a young woman in western tailored dresses and hats, to flowing batik gowns and turbans which reflected a subtle activism that audiences may not have understood. But despite these simple acts of defiance the real Winnie Mandela attempted to block the film's release arguing that she was not consulted about the HBO film and that it was an invasion of privacy. She had authorized a copyright to her autobiography, *Part of My Soul Went With Him* to Camille Cosby, wife of Bill Cosby, so that the book could be made into a television movie.

Concerned that the film trivialized the relationship between she and her husband Winnie Mandela adamantly opposed the cinematic invasion into her personal life stating, "I wish these people would realize that we are ordinary people and despite the fact that we have lost our rights in our own country, we still have the right to our private lives."

²³ Mandela, 353.

She went on to criticize Alfre Woodard's role stating, "She hardly even looks like me."²⁴ At first many might perceive this comment to mean that Woodard's physical appearance does not resemble the real Winnie Mandela. But perhaps this comment had nothing to do with physical appearance. Winnie Mandela had been an activist for nearly four decades in the South African liberation struggle, she most certainly would not have recognize the on-screen character that Woodard was portraying as resembling Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela Mandela. The rejection of strong black female leading characters and their activism persisted after the release of *Mandela*. Scholar Ruth Elizabeth Burks argues that a perpetuation of similar types of imagery, despite any good intention, continued to shape the American public's perceptions of black Americans as well as black American perceptions of themselves.²⁵ What were filmmakers offering African American audiences if not more subservient roles of black women?

Three months after *Mandela* aired on HBO, the film *Cry Freedom* made its theatrical debut in the United States. *Cry Freedom* was directed by Richard Attenborough, the Oscar winning director of *Gandhi*. Attenborough's talent, industry acclaim, and the appearance of two American actors in the starring roles guaranteed that *Cry Freedom* received a wider theatrical release in the United States. The film featured Kevin Kline as South African editor Donald Woods and Denzel Washington as Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. Based on two books by Woods, *Cry Freedom*

²⁴ William Claiborne. "Mandela's Protest; Wife of ANC Leader Tries to Block Film." *The Washington Post*. 21 September 1987. STYLE B2.

²⁵ Ruth Elizabeth Burks. "Intimation of Invisibility: Black Women and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema." *Mediated Messages and African American Culture*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996. 25-26.

examines the relationship that developed between Biko and Woods in the months before Biko's detention and subsequent death while in police custody. As a liberal Afrikaner, Woods despised his country's oppressive maneuverings but was equally critical of what was then perceived as an inherent black supremacy in the rhetoric of Biko. The film chronicles the education of Woods by Biko and his supporters as they envisioned a South Africa beyond apartheid, one that meant equality for all, not just black Africans. The film, as Peter Davis contends, follows a traditional "buddy" formula with Biko and Woods as they cast aside their racial and ideological differences and ultimately become friends. It is because of their friendship Woods remains committed to Biko even after the Black Consciousness leader's death. The film follows Woods as he forces a formal inquest into Biko's death, an effort that results in a banning order preventing the newspaper editor from publishing, speaking in public, or meeting with groups for five years. The banning order also results in Woods' being unable to leave South Africa with a manuscript about Biko and the circumstances surrounding the activist's death.²⁶ *Cry Freedom* ends with the escape of Woods and his family from South Africa to England with manuscript in hand. Washington received critical praise for his portrayal of Biko which was accompanied by an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor in 1988.²⁷

²⁶ Steve Biko was routinely accused by Pretoria with promoting violence and black supremacy which led to his banning and subsequent arrest and death. See *Biko Lives!: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*. eds. Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander, Nigel Gibson. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Steve Biko. *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*. ed. Aelred Stubbs. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002; Donald Woods. *Biko*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1978.

²⁷ *Cry Freedom* also received two additional Oscar nominations for Best Original Score and Best Original Song.

Despite mixed reviews *Cry Freedom* was condemned for choosing to focus on consciousness-raising of Woods rather than on Biko as a movement leader.

Unlike *Mandela*, *Cry Freedom* featured female characters engaged in discussions about anti-apartheid activism with their brothers and sisters in the struggle. Audiences first meet Dr. Ramphele, played by Josette Simon, a black female physician working at a township hospital. She and other hospital workers discuss a recent police raid at Crossroads, a squatters' camp for workers and their families. Believing that Steve Biko was hiding out in Crossroads before the raid took place Dr. Ramphele reassures co-workers by explaining that if Biko was indeed caught there would be some kind of public announcement of his capture. Biko's wife, Ntsiki, who volunteers at the hospital, agrees with Dr. Ramphele stating that she would have heard from Peter Jones, a colleague that was travelling with Biko, if there had been arrest since Jones did not have a "pass problem" that might have resulted in an arrest. This exchange between the women at the hospital displays an active knowledge concerning movement supporters and the ongoing efforts to avoid arrest and detention. It also reflects the movement protocols that involved female participation. The framing of empowered and self-assured female activist continues in these opening scenes of *Cry Freedom* when Ramphele pays a visit to Donald Woods at the newspaper. She enters the newspaper offices, throws down an editorial entitled, "Bantu Stephen Biko: The Ugly Menace of Black Racism," on the desk of the white receptionist and demands to know who was responsible for writing the editorial. When asked for her identification, she simply replies, Dr. Ramphele, which is met with a chuckle from the receptionist who then escorts her into Woods' office.

Ramphele: I've read this paper long enough to know that you are not one of
The worst. So it is all the more baffling that you would try to pass
off this vicious fiction off as reasoned fact.

Woods: Well, Dr...

Ramphele: (slowly) Ramphele

Woods: Ramphele. I've stuck my neck out on this paper to take a stand
against white prejudice. But if you think that means I'm going to
go soft on some sensationalist pushing black prejudice well you
brought you complaint to the wrong man.

Ramphele: Black prejudice? That's not what Steve is about at all.

Woods: Your Mr. Biko is building a wall of black hatred in South Africa.
And I will fight him as long as I sit in this chair.

Ramphele: What you do in that chair is put words in his mouth. And you
now he can't answer because he is banned.

Woods: I believe I know what Mr. Biko is about.

Ramphele: Well you believe wrong. And he can't come to you. If you are the
honest news man you claim to be you ought to go and see him.

Woods' annoyance with Dr. Ramphele's criticisms reflects that he is not accustomed to
being openly criticized by a black South Africa in this manner, especially a female.

Seemingly to believe that she must not be from South Africa as black women are not so
confrontational he inquires:

Woods: Look, where are you from?

Ramphela: From South Africa. But I was one of two to be granted a scholarship to Natal Medical School. I'm a token of your white paternalistic concern for the natives of this land.

Woods: Well I'm glad we didn't waste our money.

Ramphela: I know you are not a fool Mr. Woods. But you are uninformed. Steve Biko is one of the few people who can still save South Africa. He's in Kings Williamstown right now. That's his banning area²⁸.

This confrontation with Woods reflects a self-assuredness that the Black Consciousness Movement was instilling in its leadership and supporters. After accepting Ramphela's advice or dare to visit Biko, Woods makes his way to a building where Biko is presumed to reside. It is here that Wood meets, Ntsiki Biko, the wife of Steve Biko. Ntsiki welcomes Woods and briefly explains that the building he is visiting is a community center of sorts where they hoped to establish classes for the residents of Kings Williamstown and where craftsmen and artists are busily working alongside one another. Nearly twenty minutes into the film the audience's only access to Steve Biko or the Black Consciousness movement has been through these two women who have initiated the eventual meeting with Biko which will drive the remainder of the film.

Compared to the Winnie character in *Mandela*, the Dr. Ramphela and Ntsiki characters are groundbreaking images for black female activism in film. They are

²⁸ *Cry Freedom*. Dir. Richard Attenborough. Universal Pictures. 1987.

engaged in open dialogue with male counterparts about movement objectives and strategies which include discussions with Woods about his confusing the Black Consciousness Movement with Black Supremacy. The film also features Biko in private conversations with both Ntsiki, and his compatriot Ramphele which sets *Cry Freedom* apart from any other film of this era in that the male leadership is rarely seen engaged in private dialogue with black female supporters. However as the film progresses Dr. Ramphele is also often given over to glancing at Biko with looks of admiration and concern, more than his wife who often playfully dismisses Biko's lack of caution rather than doting on him. Ramphele is soon reduced to being a simple admirer of Biko with the suggestion of a sexual relationship between the two. In one scene Biko is on the phone discussing the death of a black reporter who worked for Woods. Ramphele, positioned at a her typewriter with her back to Biko, patiently waits for him to end his conversation. She then turns around and speaks to Biko in near whispers pleading with him not to journey to Capetown as it is far too dangerous. They then exchange looks and pause for a moment which implies not just a cause for concern but the appearance of genuine affection. The presence of the typewriter suggests that the two may have been engaged in movement related items prior to the phone conversation, however the dimly light setting and the casual nature of their interactions with each other suggests a more intimate relationship. The film leaves behind Biko and the Black Consciousness supporters after his death to focus on Woods' escape from South Africa. Unfortunately, the film's framing of an empowered female physician and an equal partner/wife in the movement was also left behind. Perhaps that is why the black female representation in later films

like *A World Apart* (1988), *Sarafina* (1992), and *Bopha!* (1993) are so troubling. These films followed a cinematic formula of black female characters submitting to conservative constructions of gender and race during an era when black empowerment was revolutionizing cinema across the United States.

In an era noted for gender transformations in black urban music, Hollywood of the 1980s continued to reject any alternative readings of black female activism in civil rights or apartheid era films. Black performers like the dynamic Tina Turner, Janet Jackson, MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, and Salt-N-Pepa were re-shaping the discourse on the white male dominated music industry. Black Feminists writers like bell hooks were demanding a space for healthier and at the very least more realistic cultural representations of black women. Here also was an opportunity for filmmakers of the civil rights and apartheid era films to offer counter-narratives to the “bitches and hos” that began appearing in the “ghetto-centric” New Black Cinema films from directors like Spike Lee, John Singleton, and Mario Van Peebles.²⁹ Instead the characters that emerged were Elsie, a domestic; Sarafina, a petulant teenage girl; Zandi, an irrational fool; and Rosie, a wife and mother who chose self-preservation over community.

The film *A World Apart* (1988) was the first docudrama that attempted to challenge the prevailing male-centered storylines of the apartheid era films that dominated this period. *A World Apart*, released in 1988, was the fictionalized account of

²⁹ The new Black Cinema is defined as an explosive period black independent films by emerging directors which also included Bill Duke, Charles Burnett, and Robert Townsend. See: *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *New Jack City* (1991), *Boyz in the Hood* (1991),

the arrest and detention of white South African activist Ruth First. The screenplay, written by First's daughter Shawn Slovo, was devised as a coming of age narrative Molly, a young Afrikaner girl, growing up in the shadow of her liberal activist parents. The torment caused by her father's absence and her mother's detention were the primary catalysts for Molly's relationship with the black characters in the film. While the film did not shy away from politics, and referenced a passing support for communist ideologies, there was no room for black female activism. The only black female supporting character was Elsie; the domestic that young Molly turned to for comfort during her mother's detention. Solomon, Elsie's brother was the activist in the family. The audience is made aware of his activism within the ANC when he offers Molly a beaded bracelet of Black, Green, and Gold which represent the African National Congress. This is the only scene among the apartheid era films to disclose the meaning behind the ANC colors, "Green for the land, black for the people, and the yellow for the gold."³⁰ This simple explanation revealed the inherent black nationalism of the ANC and their position on black economic rights regarding the nation's mineral wealth. Later Solomon is arrested for speaking at a political rally attended by his sister and Molly. Despite her attendance at the rally, audiences are never made aware of Elsie's activist past. Elsie was therefore relegated to the role of surrogate parent for Molly rather than mentor in the liberation struggle. That role was instead reserved for Molly's mother and father, the white liberal Afrikaners.

³⁰ *A World Apart*. Dir. Chris Menges. Working Title Films. 1988

This role of “mentor” to a white female character was consistent in the civil rights era narratives being released at the same time. The film *Heart of Dixie* (1989) and the television series *I’ll Fly Away* (1991-1993) all featured black female supporting characters as domestics that provided emotional support to their white charges. In *Heart of Dixie*, based on the book *Heartbreak Hotel* by Anne Rivers Siddon, Maggie, a white southern sorority girl, and the film’s protagonist, relies upon Keefi, a beloved black domestic working at the sorority house where Maggie resides. After witnessing a brutal police attack at an Elvis concert, Maggie is prevented by Keefi from stepping in to help a black youth. Having no one among her circle of white conservative southern friends to confide in, Maggie seeks out Keefi desperate to discuss the injustice they both witnessed. The following scene takes place at Keefi’s rural home:

Keefi: (to her neighbors that look on suspiciously) This is Maggie. She’s one of my girls.

Maggie: I’m mad. I want to know what happened?

Keefi: (angry) You here about a negro boy you don’t even know. You telling me that baby?

Maggie: Doesn’t matter if I know him or not. What happened to him was wrong and I want to do something about it.

Keefi: Now you listen here girl. There bidness and then there’s bidness. But this ain’t yours.

Maggie: Your telling me I’m not s’pose to feel anything When something like that happens?

Keefi: What I’m saying is this ain’t YOUR bidness. (Turns to a small altar with the candles in front of two framed photographs. One of the Martin Luther King, Jr. and one of a young man in graduation attire.)

Keefi: It's their business. Only Theirs

Maggie: Your saying ignore it? Do nothing?

Keefi: Honey, I prays them and him [photograph of a white Jesus] points the way. Takes care of all of them that vanish to death.

Maggie: I still can't believe that enough

Keefi: Cause you still believe in Santa Claus baby.

Maggie: I believe in doing what's right.

Keefi: Maggie look here, look at these two. They were boys. My Lights. There ain't nobody know more about the pumping and pain or how to take it. They's all I got.

Maggie: I still want to do something.

Keefi: I know girl.³¹

Essentially Keefi as mentor and emotional crutch demands that Maggie not get involved and to leave the fighting up to the men. After writing a scandalous article in the school paper about the attack on the young man, Maggie is expelled from school. Before leaving, Maggie comes to the assistance of a young black female showing up to register for classes; this young student represented the integration of the university. This nameless black female character does more for black female activism in film than any other up to

³¹ *Heart of Dixie*, Dir. Martin Davidson. MGM, 1989.

that point. No space is given to Elsie and Keefi to express an activist past or present, instead these characters contribute in establishing their white charges' humanity.³²

In 1988, an episode of the critical acclaimed CBS series, *The Equalizer*, reflected on the armed struggle within South Africa. The series followed retired CIA operative Robert McCall around the streets of New York City as he lent his resources and skills in the fight against crime. In the episode, "Day of the Covenant," McCall has pulled a few strings with contacts at the State Department to secure political asylum for his son's South African girlfriend, Zandi. The episode opens with a montage of edited scenes from the film *Cry Freedom*. The montage includes scenes from the demolition of the Crossroads settlement, the student uprising in Soweto, and the recreation of the death of Hector Pieterse, an image popularized by the international press. Along with a crying Desmond Tutu was a voiceover of Winnie Mandela's eulogy for the Soweto students killed during the uprising. The montage established for audiences a historical context of the violence and intimidation that the character Zandi was desperate to escape. A student organizer back home, Zandi and her boyfriend celebrate the good news of her recent political asylum at a favorite restaurant where a masked assailant attempts to shoot her. McCall begins investigating Zandi's background and discovers Zandi was a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military arm of the ANC. The masked assailant is an Afrikaner police officer named Voorhees seeking revenge against Zandi, who he blames for masterminding a bombing that killed his wife. Zandi then spends much of the episode defending her actions and the sabotage campaign to her white American protectors. Soon

³² Guerrero, 114-116.

McCall and his team discover that Zandi had come to New York City to assassinate a South African bureaucrat she blames for her own father's death. Her plan is foiled by McCall moments before she hurls a grenade at her target. Seconds after she surrenders Voorhees appears, shoots, and kills Zandi. McCall then turns to the South African bureaucrat and reminds him that while Zandi might be dead, "there are 23 million just like her," and wonders how long he (South Africa) can hold on.³³

The episode, one of few in the 1980s to discuss the problematic nature of the armed struggle in South Africa, turns into a thwarted revenge narrative. It is important to point out that it was McCall, not her ANC brothers that eventually convince Zandi to give up her mission of revenge. Even the threat of being expelled from the ANC if she continued with her actions did not deter her as the following scene reveals:

ANC Member:	It's over Zandele. I just talked to Boee, the ANC will expel us if we take this kind of action. Umkhonto we Sizwe does not export of violence. It's time to go home Zandele.
Zandi:	We haven't cooled off enough yet. The MPP would be all wver us!
ANC Member:	Maybe that is a chance we'll have to take. Johannesburg is our battleground. Not New York.
Zandi:	Look if I have to I'll do it myself.
ANC Member:	A revolutionary doesn't act for her self she acts for her people! Give this up Zandele.

³³ "Day of the Covenant." *The Equalizer*. Episode 71. Dec. 7, 1988.

Zandi: I will give up nothing.³⁴

Her refusal to back down from her mission of revenge against the man she blames for her father's death is evident in this scene. However Zandi is being admonished by the male ANC members who accuse her of being dangerous to the movement objectives.

Ultimately Zandi has to pay for her affinity toward radical political action and violence. The character of Zandi challenges the directives of the male leaders, supports the armed struggle, and is thereby denied the status of a heroic activist.

Establishing black heroines in apartheid era narratives for American audiences to identify with or relate to was difficult as there were no counterparts to these women in civil rights era films either. The film *The Long Walk Home* (1992) starred Whoopi Goldberg as Odessa Cotter a domestic who chooses to walk rather than ride the bus in this fictionalized account of the Montgomery Bus Boycotts. Goldberg's co-star Sissy Spacek received equal screen time as Goldberg's white employer. The inconvenience of not having a maid results in Spacek carpooling Goldberg to the chagrin of the white neighbors. The film's attempt to focus on the extraordinary commitment of ordinary people in the fight against racial segregation was negated by the inclusion of the white perspective of the Montgomery Bus Boycott; a storyline that had not yet been fully developed in either documentary or docudrama but diluted Odessa's own quite activism. And focusing on the Montgomery Bus Boycott meant further adhering to a romanticized rendering of the non-violent direct action tradition. Even the *King* docudrama in 1977

³⁴ "Day of the Covenant." *The Equalizer*. Episode 71. Dec. 7, 1988.

featured the early squabbles among the black community over the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association and their struggles with the white business leaders. Still, even in 1992 the only means to share the Montgomery story from the bottom up, from Odessa's point of view, was to also include her white employer's perspective as well.

The film version of the musical *Sarafina* (1992) represented a unique departure from the previous civil rights and apartheid era films. The entire film was told from the perspective of Sarafina, played by South African actress, Leleti Khumalo. Sarafina was a precocious teenager, enamored with Nelson Mandela, but more for his celebrity than for his politics. Desperate to become famous herself, and not necessarily through activism, Sarafina is at once revealed to be a reluctant activist. Her disapproval of an act of sabotage against the school by fellow classmates is not because she fears them being caught but she fears instead that the end of term concert might be cancelled. Sarafina wants to play Nelson Mandela in the school production. Her male classmates rebuke her attempts at stardom. But audiences are left to make a distinction between Sarafina the silly school girl or Sarafina the activist making a statement against state oppression and "gender apartheid." Notice that she does not want to play Winnie Mandela who despite being banned during the period the film takes place (set during the mid 1980s), Winnie Mandela was a strong political figure among the student leaders. No, Sarafina the character makes a concerted choice to support the mythology of Nelson Mandela, the martyred leader.

As tensions increase and Sarafina is drawn into the youth movement she struggles with reverence for her teacher, Ms. Masemuko, played by Whoopi Goldberg, and her beleaguered mother, played by Miriam Makeba, a domestic for an Afrikaner family. In a scene where Sarafina is visiting her mother at work, her mother asks of her daughter's radical behavior if she has "gone crazy?" Sarafina replies, "Yes, I've gone crazy. Sarafina, according to her mother, was not acting "normal" which meant that Sarafina was acting like a defiant teenager, something more relatable than a teenager moving toward armed resistance. Sarafina then begins a speech romanticizing her dead father's heroism "in the struggle" but her mother brings Sarafina back to reality by stating that her father left them behind, and left his wife behind to take care of his children. Yelling at Sarafina for being stupid and romanticizing the struggle, the girl replies to her mother, "I'd rather die like him than live like you." This exchange, the student protests, and the revelation that her beloved teacher was murdered while in detention induced Sarafina to comply with the murder of a nefarious black police officer who routinely terrorized the students. Sarafina, as a female activist, does not abide by the non-violent protest tradition and stands in stark contrast to previous female characters denied on-screen activism. But even Ms. Masembuko, a beloved teacher, who encouraged the students responded to Sarafina's inquiry about the armed struggle, that "I can't kill. Don't ask me to kill."

After a student protest Sarafina is detained and interrogated by the Special Branch. Immediately after her release she visits her mother where she apologizes to her and all mothers who sacrificed so that the movement leaders and activists could continue the fight. Sarafina then remarks that "No songs are written about you, Ma." Sarafina has

reestablished the film's moral compass by renouncing the armed struggle and praising her mother. The film concludes with Sarafina portraying Nelson Mandela in the end of term concert. Considering that apart from the docudrama *Mandela*, there is not a single reference to Winnie Mandela or any other female activists in any of the theatrical films of this period. Suggesting again that female activism represented a subordinate class of activism that would remain mute throughout the next decade.

In 1993, the film *Bopha!* was again told entirely from the black South African perspective. The film united Danny Glover and Alfre Woodard as parents raising a son in the relative comfort of middle class lifestyle made possible by Glover's position as a police sergeant. The film takes place in the mid-1980s and despite the State of Emergency, the township where the characters lived had not yet experienced the violence and civil unrest that plagued much of the country. Glover's character, Micah, takes pride in his position and is respected by his white commanding officer. His wife Rosie, a domestic for a the commanding officer's family, is allowed to live at home with her family; a clear departure from the portrayal of domestics in feature films like *A World Apart*, *Cry Freedom*, and *Sarafina*. As their son Zweli's growing activism in the student movement becomes unavoidable the relationship between Rosie and Micah quickly deteriorates. Rosie's middle class lifestyle has afforded her the opportunity to avoid much of the overt economic oppression that many in her township experience. She complies with rather than complains about the injustices of the pass laws in the segregated township. She lives somewhat isolated from all of the bloodshed and only until it literally arrives on her doorstep does she confront it. As tensions escalate between Rosie and her

husband over the student unrest she refuses to give up her son to the police. Vincent Canby said of Woodard's portrayal, that it was a "restrained performance that's never allowed to seek easy sympathy."³⁵ Rosie's domestic life implodes, rendering her nearly catatonic when she is shunned by the women in her township, her home is burned down by protestors, and her son escapes to join the movement. The conclusion of the film has Rosie and Micah attending a mass funeral for the slain students of their township. The crowd envelopes them both and Micah is stabbed to death before reaching his son, now a celebrated student leader. *Bopha!* did not fare well at the box office only pulling in less than \$215,000 in U.S. ticket sales, perhaps suggesting that by 1993 the apartheid era had lost much of its cinematic appeal with democratic elections upon the horizon.³⁶ What can be concluded is that the Rosie represented another fragile black woman, or "sister in distress" that had been a mainstay in numerous contemporary films that featured black actresses.³⁷

Despite the preponderance of stoic wives, surrogates, and "foolish girls" there were moments between 1987 and 1993 when black female activism was visible on television and movie screens across the United States. That much of their activism was relegated to the sidelines was not uncharacteristic during this period when much of the new scholarship concerning the bottom-up approach to civil rights was forthcoming with female activists as subjects pushed to the forefront. That these characters and narratives

³⁵ Vincent Canby, "Apartheid and a Flaw. *The New York Times*. 24 September 1993 C p18 C1

³⁶ www.imdb.com. Accessed 15 August 2010.

³⁷ Films that featured "sister in a distress" included *Mahogany* (1975); *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972); *The Color Purple* (1985); *Daughters of Dust* (1990); *What's Love Got to Do With It* (1993), *Waiting to Exhale* (1995). See Bogle, 252-453.

were featured at all within the United States does reflect an awareness and an acceptance of the struggles against white supremacy within South Africa. Framing their struggles so that American audiences might better understand or relate to the narratives meant too often narrowing the activism down to male movement leaders, reaffirming the non-violent direct action strategies of the civil rights movement, and diminishing the roles of black females within the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements. Perhaps the upcoming 2012 release of *Winnie*, a feature film about Winnie Mandela will rectify these earlier disparities.

CHAPTER VI

“WHEN POP STARS SPEAK OUT”¹ ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID

It is one thing to boycott South Africa. But it is a tremendous thing to get these musicians and artists involved, because they reach people we never reach.²

E.S. Reddy, former director of the
United Nations Committee on
Apartheid

Just as many of us sung out on behalf of the victims of Africa's famine so we are singing out also for those hungry for freedom.³

Little Steven Van Zandt, co-producer
“Sun City.”

On Friday, October 11, 1985 thousands of anti-apartheid activists and their supporters gathered around the nation to participate in rallies and marches in honor of the United Nations International Day for Southern African Political Prisoners. Nearly six hundred thousand activists in thirty cities came together in a coalition and protested throughout the weekend to continue pressuring colleges, banking and investment firms,

¹ “Sun City: An Anti-Apartheid Education: The Video, the Book, the Record” Circular, Africa Fund, 1985.

² David Marsh, *Sun City, by Artists United Against Apartheid: The Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, the Making of the Record*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 80.

³ Little Steven Van Zandt quoted in an interview with *Jet Magazine*. Ironically the cover story of this edition was regarding the actor and activist Danny Glover who informs readers that he will star in the biopic about Nelson Mandela, and an “African Affairs” article concerning the arrest of former first daughter Amy Carter arrested along with one hundred Brown University students protesting apartheid. Robert E. Johnson, “Rock Star Says, ‘Mama Forgot to Teach Me That I Was White’; Helps to Raise Millions to Fight Racism,” *Jet Magazine*, March 17, 1986.

and corporations into divesting funds from companies doing business with South Africa. Citibank, one of the few remaining American investment banks to continue extending credit to South Africa, became the target of a broad coalition of anti-apartheid supporters in New York City. Accompanying these activists at the CitiCorp Center that October were performers from Artists United Against Apartheid (AUAA), an organization comprised of singers and musicians supporting a cultural boycott against South Africa. The members of AUAA joined the Reverend Jesse Jackson and other activists who arrived at Citibank to encourage customers to close their accounts with a corporation that continued to invest in the apartheid system. Film director Jonathan Demme arrived with a film crew to shoot the AUAA members at the rally for inclusion in a music video that was to accompany the new AUAA record, entitled *Sun City*. Musicians, singers, protestors, and Citibank customers became part of the music video, which later premiered at the United Nations on October 30, 1985. The overtly political framework of the AUAA project stood in direct contrast to its cultural predecessors that addressed famine relief in Africa and to a lesser extent farmer relief in the heartlands. That AUAA organizers were able to mainstream an “agit-pop” album like “Sun City” in an era of “compassion rock” was a significant achievement for the anti-apartheid movement.⁴

Movement scholars have examined the AUAA project but have depicted it as a singular event of activism during a year of charity or “compassion rock” rather than as a

⁴ I borrow T.V. Reed’s concise definition of “agit-pop” as being “a word play on the term “agit-prop” the shorthand term for agitation propaganda used by radicals to characterize movement-based political art in the 1930s.” T.V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 156.

case study in the resurgence of black radicalism in mid-1980s, long perceived dormant within the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Among the more comprehensive examinations of the musical projects that year is by scholar T.V. Reed. In a chapter entitled, “We are [Not] the World: Famine, Apartheid, and the Politics of Rock Music,” Reed moves beyond the criticism that sees musical projects like the Live Aid concert for famine relief as another vanity project or cause de célèbre for aging rock stars. Instead, Reed argues that these types of benefit concerts provided space for the political education of millions wanting to do more than just tune in to a “mega telethon” and write a donation check. Organizers of Live Aid, according to Reed, were essentially naïve to the political machinations necessary to carry out lasting famine relief efforts. Their liberal philanthropic interests were highly contested amid the Thatcher and Reagan conservatism of the decade.⁵ Organizers of Live Aid had to move beyond their initial funding requests for famine relief to the more politically charged campaign of African debt relief. Within this context according to political scholar John Street the “pop star,” had to evolve into a politician to enact lasting change. Most pop musicians, according to Street, are not politically engaged. But those performers of the mid-1980s that were willing to enter the political fray used their platform to raise awareness, thereby privileging pop music as a legitimate form of political expression.

⁵ Ibid., 156-178. See also David L. Hostetter, “Lost in the Star: Apartheid and American Popular Culture,” *Movement Matters: American Anti-apartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 106-109; James M. Jasper, “Culture and Biography: The Pleasures of Protest,” *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movement*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 210-228; Neal Ullestad, “Rock and Rebellion: Subversive Effects of Live Aid and ‘Sun City,’” *Popular Music*, 6, no. 1 (1987): 67-76.

The popularity of a musical performer during this era afforded a type of “capital” to borrow an argument from scholar Christian Lathusen. This “capital,” according to Street, was dependent upon the pop star’s continued success within the music industry. A pop star could not achieve access to policy makers without a combination of popular success and an ongoing commitment to an individual cause. Bob Geldof, lead singer of a nominally successful Irish *new wave* band, had no direct path to a British Prime Minister. But Geldof had attained enough industry success as a performer to achieve an impressive network of industry contacts. Utilizing his industry network Geldof organized Live Aid which later evolved into a campaign for African debt relief that afforded Geldof access to policy makers. Geldof’s ascension to “pop politician” further legitimated his cause which conferred upon him a moral capital that endured for nearly three decades.⁶ It was during this political evolution of philanthropic rock that the organizers of AUAA emerged with a different agenda, one clearly defined as political over compassionate.

Organizers for AUAA realized from the beginning that their project, intended to agitate policy-makers, would not achieve the popular or economic success of the earlier famine relief projects. What contributed to the famine relief album successes was the collection of performers chosen to participate. The majority of performers involved in projects like Band-Aid and USA for Africa were well known rock and pop singers; most were at the height of their careers, with legions of young fans. The AUAA organizers instead invited an eclectic group of performers most of whom were not as popularly

⁶ John Street, “The Pop Star as Politician: from Belafonte to Bono, from Creativity to Conscience,” *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, ed. Ian Peddie, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 49-61.

known to the MTV generation of the mid-1980s. The liberation themes of the AUAA project also stood in direct contrast to the widely accepted compassion themed benefit albums by Band Aid and USA for Africa released earlier in the year. Embedded along with the AUAA anti-apartheid message was an attack against the discriminatory practice of genre segmentation within the recording industry that prevented minority artists from achieving the commercial success of rock and pop acts of the era.⁷ The ferocity of the AUAA project's overtly political agenda made organizing and distributing the album and its companion pieces a challenge. How then was the inherent radicalism of AUAA's anti-apartheid musical project intended to break through to an MTV generation that had already been bombarded with a summer of charity-rock focused on famine in Africa or farmers in America? How could the Sun City project defy the conventions of charity-rock and assist in renegotiating the culture of activism at the end of the twentieth century? In this chapter I examine how the Sun City project supported a groundswell of anti-apartheid activism by contributing to a political legitimacy of "agit-pop." The creation of the Sun City album also reprised a current of black cultural nationalism many believed dormant since the 1970s. And finally, organizers of the AUAA appropriated the relatively new media of Music Television (MTV) as an essential tool for activism. What resulted was a political album critically praised, but popularly ignored because of its difficult to define genre, and aggressively political agenda.

⁷ Genre segmentation in the recording industry is the classifying of musical performers into sub categories such as pop, rock, Latin, and urban for promotional and sales purposes.

AUAA coalesced during what *Spin Magazine* entitled the “Summer of Conscience.”⁸ In 1985, the music world experienced a wave of consciousness-raising not seen since the turbulent 1960s. An outpouring of humanitarian relief efforts permeated American culture that year due in part to the enormous success of the famine relief album “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” released the previous December. Band Aid, an all star lineup of British musicians and singers, was coordinated by Bob Geldof who felt compelled to act after watching a BBC special news report on the Ethiopian famine. What resulted was a benefit album intended to raise funds for humanitarian relief in Africa’s famine stricken regions. The successful sales of the “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” single inspired numerous benefit recordings by “all-star pop” groups around the world as well as a heavy metal benefit album.⁹ Activist and performer Harry Belafonte sought out black American artists such as Quincy Jones, Michael Jackson, and Lionel Richie to create a benefit album as well, resulting in the super group USA for Africa and their album “We Are the World.” USA for Africa was comprised of both black and white popular recording artists, most of who were at the height of their musical popularity.

The fund-raising success of the famine relief albums was impressive, but Band Aid organizers wanted to move beyond the recording studios to a world stage. Plans for a global concert to increase awareness and fundraising for famine relief were soon realized

⁸ John Leland, “Talking About Revolution: Summer of Conscience,” *Spin Magazine*, 4 No. 6, September 1988, 28.

⁹ All start groups included *Northern Lights* (Canada); *Cantare*, *Cantaras* (South America); *Band fur Africa* (Germany); *Australia Too* (Australia); *Chanteurs Sans Frontieres* (France); *Yu Rock Misija* (Yugoslavia); *Hear n’ Aid* (USA). For additional information on the various celebrity groups lending their support to famine relief see <http://live-aid-dvd.com/gallery4.htm>

when Live Aid, the multi-stage, transatlantic benefit concert to fight famine took place on July 13, 1985. The money raised from the deferment of artists' royalties, concert tickets sales, merchandise, and album sales was administered by Band Aid Trust, the non-profit organization that distributed the funds for famine relief. Activist and musician Bob Dylan, while performing in Philadelphia during Live Aid, inquired aloud as to whether or not a few million dollars of the money that had been raised for famine relief might be allocated to American farmers suffering from a "poor economy and bad policies."¹⁰ His request led to Farm Aid, a benefit concert for American farmers organized by country superstar Willie Nelson. The Farm Aid benefit concert on September 22, 1985 brought rock and country singers to Champlain, Illinois in order to raise awareness concerning Reagan-era federal policies that favored corporate farms over independent and family owned farms. Funds generated from Farm Aid were allocated to organizations that provided legal, educational, and mental health services for struggling farmers. Audiences throughout the summer were treated to an amazing array of talent, which included the return of trusted "socially conscious" performers such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. The appearance of '60s-era activist-musicians legitimated the organizers' philanthropy and the consciousness-raising efforts of the events. This wave of socially conscious rock was infectious and inspired musician Steve Van Zandt, popularly known as Little Steven, and producer Arthur Baker to create an anti-apartheid "solidarity album." According to Baker, he and Little Steven invited a "few friends to pitch in and make a statement of

¹⁰ Ted Quadday, "The Farm Aid Mission," *Farm Aid: A Song for America*, ed. Holly George-Warren, Foreword by Willie Nelson, (New York: Rodale Books, 2005), 19-23

solidarity with the music community.¹¹” Baker recalled that some performers and industry professionals questioned whether another benefit record was needed, to which he replied was “absurd.” Baker was adamant about the production of an anti-apartheid protest album stating, “If you can make great records, say something, and help people out at the same time, why not keep making them?” He argued that, “just because there were two records made trying to help people who were starving in Ethiopia, there’s no reason there shouldn’t be a record to help people who are starving for freedom in South Africa.”¹² The formation of AUAA may have been initially criticized as an extension of the Band Aid or USA for Africa experience, but AUAA organizers made it clear that their project was meant to agitate both performers and policymakers.

The overtly political nature of the AUAA was inspired by co-founder and musician Steven Van Zandt, or Little Steven to his fans. Little Steven was perhaps best known at the time for being one of Bruce Springsteen’s best friends and guitarist in the *E Street Band*. Little Steven also had a solo career as lead singer in, Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul, which released two albums before the AUAA project. His solo projects tackled controversial subjects such as Native American rights, nuclear proliferation, and U.S. intervention in Central America but they received limited radio play in the United States. After hearing Peter Gabriel’s stirring rendition of “Biko” (1980), about the murdered South African student activist and Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, Little Steven traveled to South Africa to educate himself on the

¹¹ Jim Gutterman, “Van Zandt Organizes Record to Protest Apartheid,” *Rolling Stone*, October 10, 1985, 16.

¹² Ibid.

conditions under apartheid. He returned an avid supporter of the United Nations' cultural boycott of South Africa.¹³ Inspired by the dramatic events during the "summer of conscience," Little Steven had begun working on an anti-apartheid song for an upcoming album. A fortuitous meeting with Danny Schechter, a producer for the ABC series *20/20* and an anti-apartheid activist in his own right, convinced Little Steven to release a single to address apartheid rather than wait to complete an entire album; what resulted was the founding of AUAA and the Sun City single.¹⁴

The song "Sun City" was a call to action for performers to make a pledge never to play Sun City, a multimillion dollar Las Vegas style resort and sports complex located in the nominally free homeland of Bophuthatswana. This homeland was designated a free state by the South African government a move that resulted in the forced relocation of over one million black Africans to the arid, desolate region approximately one hundred miles outside of Johannesburg. Sun City was designed to increase white tourism to a region that according to officials was located outside the apartheid system. Entertainment bookers at the resort intended to lure international performers and athletes to Sun City's remote location by offering inflated appearance fees as well as large competition purses. Little Steven and Baker created AUAA as a way to openly denounce not only apartheid's newest façade but those complicit in its promotion. The royalties from the sale of a "Sun

¹³ While in South Africa Little Steven met the group Malopoets and took their request to heart that upon his return to the United States he would promote the cultural boycott and do what he could to prevent performers from complying with the apartheid regime by agreeing to appear and perform in South Africa or any of the so called "homelands." *The Making of Sun City*, 1985.

¹⁴ Danny Schechter became very good friends with South Africa activist Ruth First meeting her in South Africa. Danny Schechter, *The More You Watch the Less You Know: News Wars [sub]Merged Hopes Media Adventures*, Forewards by Jackson Browne and Robert W. McChesney, Revised Ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999), 297-298.

City” single (and later an LP, video documentary, and merchandise) would be donated to the New York based non-profit organization, The Africa Fund. The Africa Fund would in turn distribute the proceeds to the families of South African political prisoners, provide education to exiles and support other humanitarian relief efforts in South Africa.

The Sun City project joined an ongoing sport boycott and cultural boycott against South Africa. The sport boycott against South African athletes and national teams from international competition was the most widely publicized of the boycotts. As early as 1954, Father Trevor Huddleston, a British-born Anglican priest and human rights advocate working in the homelands of the Transvaal promoted efforts to prevent international cultural exchanges with the apartheid regime of South Africa. Later, the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid supported black African demands for a cultural boycott. The Special Committee collaborated with international artists, literary groups, musicians and composers to form the Committee of World Artists Against Apartheid. The objective of the committee was to create exhibitions, symposium, and competitions that developed “proposals for positive action against apartheid.” Perhaps the most controversial of the Special Committee’s initiatives was the *Register of Entertainers, Actors and Others Who Have Performed in Apartheid South Africa*. The frequently updated Register was created essentially to shame those performers who

accepted the inflated appearance fees from performing in South Africa, and to educate performers in how to avoid the financial lures from resorts like Sun City.¹⁵

The “Sun City” single, according to Baker, had a gritty “street sound.” This song gave Baker and Little Steven the opportunity to incorporate musicians and performers who were not necessarily asked to participate on the “studio” sounding “We Are the World Album.” Geldof had intentionally asked popular performers to participate on the celebrity driven Band-Aid single, “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” and the Live Aid concert, not because of their philanthropy or previous humanitarian efforts, but because they were extremely popular at the time. According to Geldof, “You pick people that have sold a million albums so more people will watch and contribute more money.”¹⁶ While the intention was to raise awareness about famine relief, Geldof was adamant about raising as much money as possible to the point of demanding the audience stop watching the Live Aid concert, pick up the telephones, and donate. The Sun City producers realized from the beginning they would not raise the dollar amounts that Band Aid or USA for Africa had achieved. Rather, Little Steven and Baker focused on raising awareness of the cultural boycott against South Africa and turned to performers that did not necessarily fit the “pop” sensibilities of the famine relief projects. According to Little Steven, the performers he and Baker turned to were chosen because they expressed “their

¹⁵ “The United Nations and Apartheid: 1948-1994,” *The United Nations Blue Book Series, Vol. 1. Introduction by Boutros Boutros-Ghali*, (New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations). 73-75.

¹⁶ Bob Geldof in an interview with, *The New York Times*, July 7, 1985.

social concerns all the time.”¹⁷ Little Steven asked performer Rueben Blades, an internationally known *salsero* and a Panamanian lawyer who held a Masters degree in International Law from Harvard University, to participate on the Sun City single. In a *Spin Magazine* interview, Blades said of his transition from lawyer to musician, “I became a singer because music is a vehicle through which the world can be made better.”¹⁸ When asked about the cultural boycott and his participation with AUAA, Blades responded, “I think racism is a disease of the spirit, and it’s time for artists to take a stand, to help make others aware of what’s going on and what needs to be changed.” He continued stating, “traditionally music has been used for escape, and I think it’s about time we started using music to confront as well.”¹⁹ Other activist/performers tapped for AUAA included singer Jackson Browne, well known for his activism regarding nuclear disarmament and anti-intervention in Central American; singer Bono of the Irish rock band U2 who by 1985 had cut their political teeth supporting Amnesty International; initiatives. Peter Garrett, an Australian lawyer and lead singer of Midnight Oil, was an environmental and aboriginal rights activist that said of his involvement with AUAA, “Quite often what our political leaders tell us is inclined to be propaganda or a political line and quite often musicians get the heart of the matter.”²⁰ The inclusion of activists-performers within AUAA reflected an embrace of the overtly political direction of the “Sun City” project.

¹⁷ Marsh. *Sun City, by Artists United Against Apartheid: The Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, the Making of the Record*.

¹⁸ John Leland, “Blades Running,” *Spin Magazine*, 1, no. 5, September 1985. 69

¹⁹ William Bigelow, Student Handout #1, *Sun City – A Teaching Guide*. Africa Fund, Africa World Press. 1985.

²⁰ Demme, 1985

Among the more controversial decisions made by the music project's producers was the inclusion of rap performers on the "Sun City" single. By 1985, the hip-hop genre was barely out of its infancy (and New York) when it kicked open the music industry's front door demanding an international platform. Little Steven and Baker, both based in New York, were exposed to the early incarnations of hip-hop emanating from the Bronx. The earliest rap performers, known as "Masters of Ceremonies" or "MCs" appeared throughout the five boroughs of New York. These MCs, performed at parties and entertained audiences with samples and beats that contributed to a party atmosphere. The MC soon evolved from party performer to cultural leader for the black urban youth frustrated with the black political leadership that had yet to effect necessary changes in decaying post-industrial cities.²¹ Among the earliest rappers asked to join AUAA was Afrika Bambaataa, a former gang member radicalized by the teachings of the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam in the early 1970s. Inspired by the Black Power messages of both organizations and the emerging graffiti and break culture in the Bronx, Bam created *Zulu Nation*, a "revolutionary youth culture" that created a "new alternative to the destructive life of street gangs."²² *Zulu Nation* encouraged pride in self, pride in unity, and pride through creative expression, all of which were severely lacking among New York black youth in the 1970s. In 1982, Baker produced Afrika Bambaataa's group *Soul Sonic Force* and forged a creative friendship with this pioneer of rap. When asked about the Sun City resort, Bambaataa replied, "When you start putting money and

²¹ Marcus Reeves, *Somebody Scream!: Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftermath of Black Power*, (New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2009). 21-25.

²² Reeves, 25

material things before life, something is really wrong with you. You're sick and you need to check your mind.”²³ Joining Bam in AUAA was MC Melle Mell of the hip-hop group Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five. Melle Mell was featured on the hit single “The Message.” This hugely successful rap single examined the state of black America in 1979, moving the “MC” party performer to spokesperson for the black youth. Mell said he became involved with AUAA so he could express to people “that the [skin] colors really have no barring [sic] on anything.”²⁴ Also with AUAA was Kurtis Blow, whose self-titled rap album released in 1980 featured what was essentially the first socio-political rap song, “Hard Times.” Blow highlighted what music journalist Marcus Reeves states were the harsh urban realities that young black men like Blow experienced on a daily basis.²⁵ The success of “Hard Times” and the *Kurtis Blow* album, which sold over a million copies and awarded the rap genre its first gold record, gave Blow credibility within the music industry and within the black community. Asked about his contribution to AUAA, Blow stated, “I hope this record could shed some light on the whole subject so the world could understand what’s going on over there.”²⁶

The inclusion of Run-DMC, the hip-hop world’s most hard-core group of the early eighties, reflected a concerted effort to raise awareness of a powerful new genre of music within the black community. Run-DMC had appeared on the Philadelphia stage of the Live Aid concert earlier that summer. Still a year away from achieving rap’s first

²³ *Sun City* Student Handout #1

²⁴ Demme, 1985

²⁵ Reeves, 26

²⁶ Demme, 1985

platinum record, Run-DMC was a last minute addition to the Philadelphia line-up, added after organizers were accused of discriminating against black performers since only a handful of black performers were included in the line-up. Run-DMC was the only rap group to perform at Live Aid which foreshadowed the reach of hip-hop in the years to come.²⁷ Despite the lackluster reception that Run-DMC received during Live Aid, the group still participated on the “Sun City” single.

AUAA was also not the first time Run-DMC supported anti-apartheid activism. In April 1985, Daryll McDaniels, (DMC) and Jason Mizell (Jam Master Jay) performed for the student activists campaigning for divestment at Columbia and Princeton Universities. Daryll McDaniels (DMC) told campus reporters that the group was “...against racism wherever it existed.”²⁸ Coincidentally, news producer Danny Schechter had met Run-DMC and their manager Russell Simmons in 1981 while covering a story on the emerging New York rap scene. Schechter later introduced Run-DMC to Little Steven and they became the first rap group to accept an invitation to perform on the Sun City single leading the way for the other rap performers. When asked about their participation with AUAA McDaniels (DMC) responded, “We don’t like what’s going on in South Africa. And we figured if we can put a message out...well it’s [apartheid] on t.v. and radio and everyday [we] read in papers and [people] see what’s going on, so we figured if we can

²⁷ However their performance took place from 10:18 am to 10:24am and their performance was used as a camera rehearsal for the network broadcasts rather than a live broadcast. Run-DMC’s entire performance is available on the Live Aid (DVD), Warner Music Vision, 2004. For additional information on Run-DMC’s performance at Live-Aid, see Bill Adler, *Tougher than Leather: The Rise of Run-DMC: The Authorized Biography*, 2002 Edition, (Los Angeles: Consafos Press, 2002), 141-143.

²⁸ For additional insights into the role of rap artists in the post-civil rights era see Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, (New York: St. Martin Press, 2006), 215-230.

put out a record, everybody listens to music it might do something.²⁹” The appearance of these pioneers of socio-political hip-hop contributed to the Sun City project’s cultural legitimacy within the black community. Both the activist-oriented musicians and the “in-your-face” lyrical styling of the rappers supplied the “street sound” that Little Steven and Baker wanted for the “Sun City” single.

Compared to the compassion-themed benefit songs created by Band-Aid and USA for Africa, the lyrics for the “Sun City” single were intentionally aggressive. The song was always intended to draw attention to the cultural boycott initiated by the United Nations and supported by organizations like the American Committee On Africa (ACOA) and Athletes and Artists Against Apartheid. An early demo of the song was given to perspective performers which created a controversy from the outset. The demo, written by Little Steven, included lyrics that singled out well-known performers who continued to violate the cultural boycott without repercussion.³⁰ The Sun City demo publically denounced those artists that violated the cultural boycott stating,

Linda Ronstadt, how could you do that?
Rod Stewart, tell me that you didn’t do it
Julio Iglesias, you oughta be ashamed to
Show your face
Queen and the O’Jays, what you got to say?³¹

²⁹ Demme, 1985

³⁰ Marsh, 26. An announcement of Rod Stewart’s agreement to play eight concert dates at the Sun City resort appeared in “Music News and Notes,” *Rolling Stone*, April 28, 1983; Christopher Connelly, “Ronstadt to Soweto: Drop Dread,” *Rolling Stone*, June 23, 1983; Aaron Latham, “Ronstadt in Sun City,” *Rolling Stone*, July 7, 1983; Aaron Latham, “Snow White in South Africa,” *Rolling Stone*, August 18, 1983.

³¹ Demo version of “Sun City” words and music by Little Seven. Solidarity Music. 1985

Little Steven and Baker realized that further dividing performers was the antithesis of the meaning behind AUAA. The Sun City single was meant to unify performers in an act of musical solidarity against the racism in South Africa, the U.S. government's complicity with the apartheid government, and the ongoing racial segmentation of recording artists within the music industry. The final version of the Sun City lyrics excluded those earlier lyrics and focused instead on the injustice of forced removals of black Africans to "phoney [sic] homelands," as well as the Reagan administration's policy toward South Africa by exclaiming,

Our government tells us we're doing all we can
Constructive engagement is Ronald Reagan's plan
Meanwhile people are dying and giving up hope
This quiet diplomacy ain't nothing but a joke.³²

The rebuke of the Reagan Administration's complicity with the apartheid regime established the explicitly political tone of the "Sun City" single and its subsequent LP.

In addition to admonishing the Reagan administration the "Sun City" lyrics included a current of self-determination and Pan-African sentiments consistent with the Black Power movement. The chorus "I ain't gonna play Sun City" gave black performers within AUAA an opportunity to make both a political and professional stand. The song's chorus, repeated several times, was a declaration of self-determination for the black performers within AUAA. Sun City empowered black performers to reject the economic pressures of their record labels while at the same time receiving support for their

³² "Sun City" words and music by Little Steven. Solidarity Music. 1985.

convictions from a community of performers across musical genres. Black performers had been historically criticized for performing in “white only” clubs throughout the Jim Crow era. Refusal to play in segregated clubs jeopardized profits as well as possible future recordings for an artist. But while black performers were compelled to play to white only audiences, they saved their more dynamic performances for their black only audiences.

The “Sun City” single gave black performers the opportunity to publicly take a stand against apartheid and the exploitive practices of the recording industry. In the 1980s, the music industry continued to segregate recording artists based upon “genre” which included Black, Latin, and Jazz. The *Billboard Top 40*, perhaps the music industry’s most powerful argument in support of genre segmentation, reflected the ascendancy of white recording artists. Genre segmentation prevented numerous non-white performers from attaining the same level of capital that white artists garnered from national recognition and album sales. Jazz guitarist Stanley Jordan said of the Sun City project’s overall political consciousness, “It just goes to show that all these musics [sp] that have been segmented off into different departments do really come from the same source and that all these people really could play together. Why doesn’t it happen more often?”³³ The inclusion of jazz performers like Jordan and Miles Davis with the “Sun City” project was a critical component in AUAA organizer’s attempts to break down the genre barriers of what Little Steven called “musical apartheid.” T.V. Reed claimed that the usage of the term “apartheid” in this reference could trivialize the state-sanctioned

³³ Stanley Jordan, interviewed for the Making of Sun City documentary

apartheid of South Africa. However, Little Steven and Baker's attempts to encourage cross-cultural activism through music, according to Reed, brought "the issues back home" to American audiences.³⁴

Artists continued to acknowledge the anti-racist themes of the "Sun City" project. Singer Peter Gabriel was interviewed by the documentary crew filming the studio sessions about his involvement with the Sun City project. Gabriel, whose song "Biko" was the inspiration behind Little Steven's interest in South Africa, quietly professed that while apartheid was essentially a "black cause," as performers they owed a huge debt to the black musical heritage that not only inspired their own music but also generated huge sums of money for white performers. By participating on the Sun City project, Gabriel and the others were also paying homage to the black ancestries of jazz, rock and roll, reggae, and salsa.³⁵

Unlike "Do They Know It's Christmas," or "We Are the World," the "Sun City" single contained Pan-African sensibilities and established cultural links to Africa for both black and white performers. The membership of AUAA, unlike USA for Africa or Band Aid, was comprised of a black majority with more black performers than white. Also unique to the Sun City project was the presence of performers from Africa. The inclusion of South African groups Malpoets and Viva Afrika lent to the cultural and political legitimacy of the Sun City recordings. Tina Turner said of her involvement with USA for

³⁴ T.V. Reed, "Famine, Apartheid, and the Politics of 'Agit-pop,'" *Cercles* 3, (2001); 105.

³⁵ Gabriel's collaboration extended beyond the "Sun City" single and included a chanting sequence that accompanied the song "No More Apartheid" that appeared on the long playing Sun City album.

Africa that while the lyrics to “We Are the World” were written by black guys, it was “the white boys who took it away in the end.” Turner meant that for her, the memorable or most inspiring parts of “We Are the World” were sung by white artists like Bruce Springsteen, Daryl Hall, and Huey Lewis.³⁶ By contrast, Little Steven, a white artist, included the lyric, “They’re stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back,” acknowledging the African cultural practice of referring to countrymen as “brothers and sisters.” The solidarity the AUAA performers felt extended to those suffering under apartheid’s injustices, leader to a recognition of an extended “world family.”

Released in October 1985, the “Sun City” single met resistance from radio station program directors. The eclectic musical format of the single, which included a fusion of jazz, rock, and salsa, along with rap and African beats (not to mention the anti-Reagan rhetoric) made for interesting music but created a problem for genre-specific radio programs. Therefore mainstreaming the politically volatile “Sun City” single relied heavily upon branching out beyond radio play. Bill Martin, the program director for contemporary hit radio station WCBY stated, “We are playing ‘That’s What Friends Are For,’ the Dionne Warwick record that benefits AIDS research. But this [Sun City] is a political record...I don’t want to get involved in a political song.”³⁷ In Charlotte, North Carolina, the single received higher rotation on the black-oriented WGIV radio station than the local rock station, despite the rock stars like Bono and Bruce Springsteen’s performance. The program director at WGIV acknowledged that the “Sun City” single

³⁶ Kurt Loder, “Inside the USA for Africa Session.” *Rolling Stone*, March 28, 1985.

³⁷ Jeff Borden, “‘Sun City’ Receiving Little Play-Some Local Station Opposed to Song,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 15, 1985.

was not as big as “We Are the World” but had received positive feedback. He was also put off as well by the overtly political musically viewpoint and stated, “I don’t like it. “We Are the World” had a flow. This is just all crushed together.”³⁸

Inspired by the cross-cultural collaborations that took place during the recording of the single, various AUAA artists contributed additional songs to the “Sun City” project. So much material came together that Little Steven and Baker had enough to create an entire album, which included an information guide to educate people on apartheid and the cultural boycott. The guide included a section entitled, “What Can You Do,” and encouraged customers to continue informing themselves about South Africa and to contact their “elected representatives to take a strong stand against apartheid.” The information guide suggested donations to The Africa Fund in exchange for a listing of organizations that needed help in the fight against apartheid.³⁹ The Africa Fund also made a “Sun City Teaching Guide” available to teachers and organizations. Student handouts included quotes from AUAA performers and ideas on how students could contribute to the anti-apartheid effort. Consistent with the anti-racism themes of the Sun City project, Student Handout #2 suggested that when individuals planned to create an anti-apartheid presentation they should consider how to “not just point the finger at someplace else but also deal with racial and social problems here.” These more traditional educational tools were essential for mainstreaming the more controversial tone of the Sun City project.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Sun City Information Guide, *Sun City: Artists Against Apartheid* (LP) Manhattan Records, 1985.

On October 30, 1985, the music video that accompanied the “Sun City” single premiered at the United Nations to an esteemed audience of recording artists, dignitaries, and anti-apartheid activists. The next day the “Sun City” music video debuted on Music Television (MTV), carrying the anti-apartheid message far beyond the urban radio waves. MTV, created just four years earlier, had risen to a remarkable level of cultural influence. By 1983, MTV had access to twenty-six million homes but it was more widely available in suburban and rural areas of the United States upon its initial launch.⁴⁰ Network creator Robert Pittman worked with market researchers to create the “I Want My MTV” campaign that featured rock stars encouraging potential viewers who were watching at a friend’s house to demand MTV from their local cable subscribers. Known as the most researched network in the history of television, MTV was marketed as a new network for those who grew up on television and rock n’ roll. There was certainty that a music video featuring the explosive themes of the Sun City single would take place.⁴¹ By 1985 it was already an industry fact that the popularity of MTV was directly tied into record sales so a successful video would only increase the “commercial viability of a recording artist(s).⁴² The limited radio play of the “Sun City” single was initially a cause for concern because of the jazz-funk- rock-soul-hip hop inspiration. The “Sun City” music video had to perform the double duty of educating viewers, through images, to the realities of apartheid, as well as generating enough record sales to increase radio airplay

⁴⁰ Levy, *Rolling Stone*, 1983.

⁴¹ Kevin Williams, *Why I [Still] Want My MTV: Music Video and Aesthetic Communication*, (Cresskill: Hampton Press, Inc. 2003), 28.

⁴² Jack Banks, *Monopoly Television: MTV’s Quest to Control the Music*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 30.

(which in turn would increase artists' royalties that would eventually go to The Africa Fund.)

While the three major American television network news programs had not ignored South Africa in 1985 there had been a noticeable decline in coverage in the wake of Ronald Reagan's re-election. But Reagan's return to office inspired the creation of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) and renewed interest in anti-apartheid activism. In 1984 there were approximately seventy instances of coverage concerning South Africa that appeared on American network news. The consciousness-raising efforts of traditional U.S. anti-apartheid groups like the FSAM and student-led divestment campaigns never wavered in their dedication to educate the American public of the blatant human rights violations occurring in South Africa. The traditional mobilization strategies and consciousness-raising tactics of these groups included marching, sit-ins, and pamphleteering. Direct action protests were proving effective in large urban areas where South African embassies, university campuses, and corporate headquarters were easy targets. But while these protests continued in urban areas, the consciousness raising efforts in the suburbs and rural areas, away from these denser population centers, were hampered, especially when the actions within the urban centers were not regularly exposed on the nightly news. How then were these organizations to gain the popular support of Americans when the traditional news outlets and conservative radio stations ignored anti-apartheid? The answer was MTV.

The "Sun City" music video on MTV brought the streets of Soweto and E. Harlem into twenty-six million homes across America. The video was *meant* to capture

the emotion of the streets. The “street-sound” that Baker had mentioned influenced the video. Little Steven was adamant that the performers be seen moving, marching, as if they “were all going somewhere.” The intensity of the rappers filmed on the streets of E. Harlem brought instant credibility to the “street” concept. The AUAA performers marched through the streets in a choreographed routine intended to inspire a sense of urgency and solidarity with their brothers and sisters marching in the streets in places like Soweto. The Sun City music video was more visually arresting than the static famine relief videos which only featured the performers during the studio recordings of the songs. The marching AUAA performers met up at the CitiCorp Plaza where they joined the coalition of activists, including the Rev. Jesse Jackson in their divestment protest. The video ends with AUAA members in Washington Square surrounded by fans and activists alike. The intercutting of historical footage of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marching from Selma along with the AUAA protestors marching and singing in the streets (in South African and in New York) reflected an urgency, emotion, and sentiment of unity against racial injustice. Footage of King marching rather than addressing a crowd from behind a pulpit suggested a less moderate King. The inclusion of this civil rights era imagery appealed to the moral authority of the anti-apartheid activism invoked in the video. The postproduction team of Kevin Godley and Lol Crème, known for their innovative editing techniques, included civil rights footage of the Children’s Crusade of Birmingham in 1963. The iconic imagery of black American youth being attacked by water cannons and police dogs was intercut with images of black South Africans being beaten with samboks by white Security Forces. The use of the grainy black and white documentary footage

was meant to convey a historical context for American audiences, while also providing a connection between the two countries' ongoing struggle for racial justice. But this imagery, along with the aggressive lyrics, and the presence of so many black artists challenged the moderate view of the sanitized civil rights memory that had pervaded mainstream America.

The timing of the "Sun City" project's release was critical to the momentum of anti-apartheid activism in the United States. National attention surrounding the Sun City project had begun in September of 1985 with stories featured in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Newsweek* not to mention *ABC's World News Tonight*. Anticipation for the single gave way to criticism over yet another benefit album hitting the airwaves. The AUAA organizers chose to present the first *Sun City* album, as well as to debut the music video on October 30, 1985, to the Centre Against Apartheid at the United Nations in New York City. AUAA organizers were presented with a citation honoring their work and their continued efforts toward ending apartheid. While presenting the album, Little Steven said in his speech that the music was meant to awaken the public's consciousness. It was not however, intended as a benefit record. He stated the South African people did not ask for charity, or pity. He explained "They (South Africans) just simply wanted us (the world) to look at them and to see *US* in them. By doing this we would all fight against the disease of racism."⁴³

The Sun City project was not successful because it raised over a million dollars for *The Africa Fund* and its subsidiaries. It was never intended solely as a fund raiser.

⁴³ Marsh, 118.

AUAA was successful because while only 70 instances of coverage concerning South Africa appeared on television network news in 1984, by 1986 the numbers of instances reached over 558. The increased coverage brought more attention to the cultural boycott, and inspired greater awareness of ongoing anti-apartheid efforts. Aside from broadcast news stories, Danny Schechter produced the weekly news program, *South Africa Now*. While the traditional strategies of consciousness-raising by the anti-apartheid organizations continued, the exposure that the “Sun City” video brought to an MTV world was undeniable. The power of MTV as a means to raise awareness among a much larger audience, even if only during a seven minute music video rotation, was a significant cultural and technological innovation that social movements of previous decades were unable to utilize. In 1985 MTV became not only an avenue to increase record sales but as an alternative vehicle for social awareness and enduring change.

While never achieving the monetary or mainstream success of the famine relief projects, the AUAA project created a space for a radical cultural protest. AUAA members were empowered by their participation in a cultural boycott and stood up against “selling-out” to apartheid’s monetary temptations. With links to black cultural nationalism, local activists (albeit musicians with national recognition) organized a solidarity movement meant to raise consciousness concerning the exploitative practices of the apartheid system within South Africa while also addressing the institutional racism within the recording industry that routinely marginalized non-white performers. Black performers within AUAA were emboldened by a new sense of community that challenged an industry constructed to exploit and divide their creative and cultural power.

The ferocity of the AUAA project's political themes made organizing and distributing the music and its companion pieces difficult. Ultimately, the "Sun City" music video and single should be lauded for its considerable achievement in reintroducing Black Power in an era when Black Power had been delegitimized by the popular media and mainstream America.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

On June 1, 2009, I interviewed Lyndall Hare, a former member of the anti-apartheid organization Charlotteans for a Free South Africa (CFSA). Hare, a white South African, was forced into exile in 1986 due to her anti-apartheid activism. She was also a new mother of a mixed-raced daughter. Having made arrangements for her daughter to be adopted by a loving family, she fled South Africa in 1986. After a short stay in New York City, she arrived in Charlotte in 1988 where she joined CFSA. Between 1985 and 1992, CFSA members participated in letter writing campaigns and conscious-raising activities in support of U.S. sanctions and corporate divestment. Members formed a coalition with the Davidson Alumni Anti-Apartheid Group to assist in their campus divestment campaigns. CFAS members also organized fundraisers on behalf of legal support for South African political prisoners and educational programs for the children of exiled South Africans. Hare noted that the CFSA never raised more than few thousand dollars for the initiatives they supported, but members remained committed to the struggle. In 1990, Hare and others in the CFSA made the much anticipated journey to Atlanta to see Nelson Mandela, while on his North American fundraising tour. Mandela's release from prison, according to Hare, was considered an overwhelming victory for millions involved in the liberation struggle. When asked why she left CFSA shortly after Mandela's North

America tour, Hare replied, “I was tired.” Years of activism had taken their toll, and Hare wanted to leave the struggle behind to focus on her graduate studies in Gerontological Studies.¹

Hare, like thousands of other anti-apartheid activists in the United States, were voracious in their pursuit of freedom for South Africa. Their commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle, especially those in exile, begs for further study. But Hare’s response as to why she left CFSA was striking in its candor. Mandela’s release became the catalyst for the American public to move on as well, solidifying the memory of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement as another victorious anti-racist movement. But a departure from movement activism in the 1990s, by anti-apartheid activists and the public, meant leaving South Africa its most vulnerable.

The years between 1990 and 1994, in South Africa, were among the bloodiest in the nation’s history. Thousands of South Africans, black and white, were killed as a result of hostilities between rival political factions. Banning orders had been lifted on the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and 31 other groups.² Former exiles and political prisoners, like Mandela, returned to South African society and began the arduous challenge of mobilizing support demanding national elections. Politically motivated killings between these political factions increased between 1991 and 1994. Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated of the incessant violence that “whenever the daily statistics of casualties were published and they said five or six people had been killed in

¹ Interview of Lyndall Hare, June 1, 2009.

² Nancy L. Clark & William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), 103.

the previous twenty-four hours, most of us would sigh with relief and say, “Only five or only six” – it was that bad.”³ KwaZulu, an eastern province, averaged one hundred people a month killed in “politically related incidents.”⁴ And much of the violence was attributed to the Inkatha Freedom Party, long suspected, by the ANC and others, to be a puppet of the white minority government. Mandela’s release from prison was a cause for international celebration, as it raised the expectations that apartheid was poised to collapse. Unfortunately, Mandela’s release, and the return of the ANC, resulted in heightened political tensions and bloodshed among the black majority.

By 1994, television had brought the South African struggle for freedom into living rooms across America for over twenty-five years. Nine apartheid-era films had been released theatrically between 1987 and 1995, which equated to roughly one film per year. A politically-charged protest album raised a little over one million dollars for educational initiatives in South Africa. The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 had passed, which finally resulted in U.S. economic sanctions against South Africa. And Mandela’s release from prison meant the return of a heroic figure to the people of South Africa. Unfortunately, movement fatigued moved in at the same time politically motivated killings increased and revered movement figures, like Winnie Mandela, were being accused of despicable crimes. Broadcast coverage of South Africa continued to decline as black on black violence in South Africa was replaced with the mediated

³ Greg Marinovich and João Silva, *The Bang Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War*, Forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), ix.

⁴ Nancy L. Clark & William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), 103-106; Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in the forward of a book, stated that

images of U.S. domestic racial conflict. Gang violence had reached a critical mass in the U.S. public consciousness, that by 1989, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* adopted, into their lexicon, "drive-bys" a shortened version of a drive-by shooting.

I argue that the popular movement fatigue that settled in after Mandela's release from prison was similar to the movement fatigue that surrounded the civil rights movement of late 1960s. Significant legislative victories had been won by both movements. Symbolic victories had been achieved by both movements. But popular support for continued mobilization against entrenched economic and social barriers retreated for both movements when the limitations of the previous victories manifested. Internal conflicts among movement participants in South Africa, as well as during the civil rights movement, impeded mass mobilization in the years after electoral gains had been achieved. The social and economic decline in America's black communities in the years that followed the zenith of the civil rights movement, also known as the "Second Reconstruction," revealed the entrenched institutional barriers that prevented black economic advancement.⁵ The legacies of the civil rights movement had much more to impart to the anti-apartheid movement than just a legacy of triumphalism.

⁵ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*. 3rd ed., (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi). See also Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics*, (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001).

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